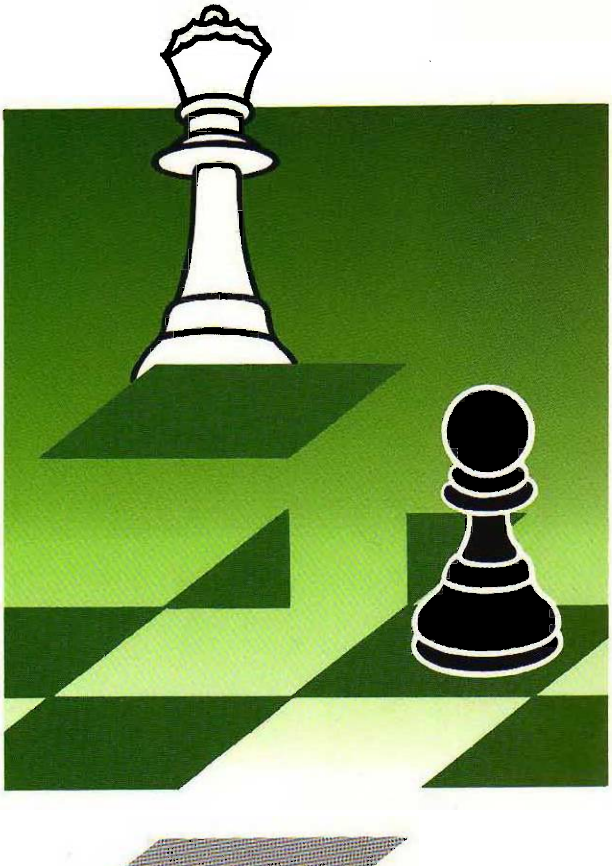
LYEV POLUGAYEVSKY

GRANDMASTER Achievement



CADOGAN
CHESS

CADOGAN CHESS BOOKS

Grandmaster Achievement

CADOGAN CHESS BOOKS

Chief Advisor: Garry Kasparov
Editor: Andrew Kinsman
Russian Series Editor: Ken Neat

Other titles in this series include:

ALEKHINE, A.
On the Road to the World Championship 1923-1927

AVERBAKH, Y.
Comprehensive Chess Endings Vols. 1-5

GELLER, Y.
The Application of Chess Theory

KARPOV, A.
Chess at the Top 1979-1984

KASPAROV, G. et al.
Kasparov – The Ultimate Grandmaster

LIVSHITZ, A.
Test Your Chess IQ Books 1-3

NEISHTADT, I.
Queen Sacrifice

POLUGAYEVSKY, L.
Grandmaster Performance

POLUGAYEVSKY, L.
The Sicilian Labyrinth Vols. 1 & 2

POLUGAYEVSKY, L. & DAMSKY, I.
The Art of Defence in Chess

SHEKHTMAN, E. (Compiler)
The Games of Tigran Petrosian Vols. 1 & 2

SHERESHEVSKY, M.
Endgame Strategy

SHERESHEVSKY, M. & SLUTSKY, L.
Mastering the Endgame Vols. 1 & 2

SMYSLOV, V.
Smyslov's 125 Selected Games

SUETIN, A.
Three Steps to Chess Mastery

TAL, M., CHEPIZHNY, V. & ROSHAL, A.
Montreal 1979

TAL, M. & DAMSKY, I.
Attack with Mikhail Tal

VAINSTEIN, B.
David Bronstein: Chess Improviser

For a complete catalogue of CADOGAN CHESS books (which includes the former Pergamon Chess and Maxwell Macmillan Chess list) please write to:

Cadogan Books, London House, Parkgate Road, London SW11 4NQ
Tel: (071) 738 1961
Fax: (071) 924 5491

Grandmaster Achievement

by

Lyev Polugayevsky

Translated and Edited by Ken Neat

CADOGAN CHESS
LONDON, NEW YORK

CADOGAN BOOKS DISTRIBUTION

UK/EUROPE/AUSTRALASIA/AFRICA
Distribution: Grantham Book Services Ltd, Isaac Newton Way,
Alma Park Industrial Estate, Grantham, Lincs NG31 9SD
Tel: 0476 67421; Fax: 0476 590223

USA/CANADA/LATIN AMERICA/JAPAN
Distribution: Paramount Distribution Center, Front and Brown Streets,
Riverside, New Jersey 08075, USA
Tel: (609) 461 6500; Fax: (609) 764 9122

This edition published 1994 by Cadogan Books plc, London House, Parkgate Road, London SW11 4NQ

English Translation Copyright © 1981, 1994 Ken Neat

First edition, entitled *Grandmaster Preparation*, published 1981 by Pergamon Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form of by any means: electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 1 85744 049 8

Cover design by Brian Robins

Typeset by Ken Neat, Durham

Printed in Great Britain by BPC Wheatons Ltd, Exeter

Contents

Translator's Preface vi

Foreword to the First Edition vii

1. How this Book Found its Author 1
2. The Birth of a Variation 21
3. In the Interval 113
4. On the Eve 153

Postscript 220

Index of Opponents 221

Index of Openings 222

Index of Variations in Chapter 2 222

Translator's Preface

The first English language edition of this book, published by Pergamon Press in 1981, was a considerably updated version of the original Russian edition, entitled *Rozhdeniye Varianta*, which appeared in 1977.

For this new Cadogan edition, the author has further revised the book. The first chapter contains some additional examples of painstaking opening preparation. The substantial chapter dealing with the 'Polugayevsky Variation' has been fully updated, and the author is able to draw the happy conclusion that attempts to 'bury' his brain-child have as yet proved unsuccessful. For the convenience of readers, an index of the variations covered in this second chapter has been included at the back of the book.

Several additions have also been made to the chapter on the analysis of adjourned games. Finally, Chapter 4, covering the topic of how to prepare for decisive games, has been expanded to include the author's Candidates Matches against Tal and Korchnoi, and the book concludes with a series of memorable games played against each of the post-war World Champions, from Botvinnik to Kasparov.

It has been a pleasure to collaborate on the updating of this fine work, the first edition of which was described by many reviewers as a modern classic.

Ken Neat
Durham, August 1994

Foreword to the First Edition

ALL of us chess players who compete in tournaments are frequently asked in lectures, either in written form or verbally, the questions: how do you play, what is the secret of your creativity?

To answer this is not easy. It is no accident that in chess literature – incidentally, the number of monographs and games collections that has appeared in recent years has been considerable, but the dearth of chess books has grown even worse – there are many reminiscences of the great masters of the past, and many biographies by players of the older generation, but practically no accounts of the very essence of creativity.

The book which you, dear reader, are about to open is rather different from a biography. It is not a ceremonial speech by a grandmaster, but an invitation to enter into the private study of one of the strongest players in the world. Exemplary order is not always to be found there. Laid out on the table are a card-index and sheets covered in notes, and preparation is in progress for the most ordinary, every-day game. The author, to whom the study belongs, invites you to sit down alongside him during his preparations. If you wish, you may ask questions; if you consider it inconvenient, wait a little: questions can be asked later...

A game begins with the opening. And grandmaster Lyev Polugayevsky, who has frequently, and on the whole successfully, performed in the most diverse of events, relates in the first part of this book about his work on one single opening. Should this part of the book be called a monograph? It can, of course. But a monograph contains a large collection of information, and information that is objective, whereas here there is a mass of information that is highly subjective, since what is described is the creation of a variation, which in chess theory bears the name of the author – the Polugayevsky Variation. Perhaps the variation has not gained the popularity it deserves – but we will not go into the vagaries of chess fashion. But from time to time it occurs in the games of players of very high class. From my own experience I know how much one wants to refute this variation, in which Black, contrary to the ancient laws of chess 'chivalry' (Black must defend!) immediately throws down the gauntlet to his opponent, and demands: attack, or else in the near future I will become White, and will turn to the offensive! But, while you are attacking, don't forget to burn your boats behind you...

In his material on this variation, the author does not give us the information that in such-and-such a game such-and-such was played, but instead creates something of a monograph-cum-biography. In it there is no mention of results in tournaments, but of searchings and disappointments, and of the paths to this or that idea. The author invites you to go with him into a rest home on the outskirts of Moscow, where the Russian Federation team is preparing, or to the USSR Championship in Baku, where you can become absorbed in that environment which both stimulates analysis, by creating a special psychological mood, and also hinders analysis, by introducing a purely competitive interest, alien to creativity.

Undoubtedly, the last page on the history of the Polugayevsky Variation has yet to be written. I personally think that some day White will succeed in casting doubts on the theoretical correctness of Black's set-up. But when and by whom will this be done? And what if the fervently analytical character of the author should enable him time and again to vindicate this variation, which, despite all systematic efforts to bury it, has yet to be buried?!

The second part of the book is of a quite different nature.

...Five hours have passed. The controller hands an envelope to one of the players, and either within two hours, or the following morning, or three, five, or even seven days later – this can happen! – the opponents again sit down at the chess board. The envelope is opened, the secret sealed move is divulged, and the adjournment session begins. There begins a competition in the art of analysing a chess position. And the winner is the one who is more precise and more accurate, the one who has seen and found more.

Initially the conditions for the two players are approximately equal. Of course, one of them knows the sealed move, while the other does not. But which is better, no one is sure. If you have sealed the move, the number of continuations to be analysed is reduced, but on the other hand, fatigued by the struggle, you may have made a mistake. However, every player has to be prepared to deal with both situations.

On the experience of the games between us, I can confirm that Lyev Polugayevsky is one of the strongest masters of the analysis of adjourned positions. And this includes positions of the most varied type.

These may be very sharp positions, where the middlegame is in full swing, where both kings are under fire, and where everything is decided by imagination. Here surprises are possible literally on the second move, and at times it is incomprehensible how grandmaster X, a strong and experienced player, after a lengthy analysis could immediately sink into thought for some 40 minutes. It means that outwardly the opponent's move must have been illogical; but in chess, logic and truth are not always synonymous.

They may be positions in which there is no, or practically no scope for calculation, which is replaced by abstractions and strategic plans, as, for instance, in the endgame with Svetozar Gligoric. Here a dogged game of chess patience is played, until the cards – sorry, pieces! – tally, and a position planned beforehand is reached on the board. What's more – and I again speak from my own experience – a good 90% of grandmasters would simply have agreed a draw: after all, it is not even apparent how to set the opponent any difficult problem, never mind place him on the verge of catastrophe!

Finally, each of us can remember at least one, and most probably several 'games of one's life' – when everything is at stake: the gold medal, a competitive title, or a place in the next stage of a competition. Yet another part of this book gives you Polugayevsky's recollections of games of this type. How do you gain a win, if it is absolutely essential? And what follows is an extremely frank – as, however, is also the case in the other sections – account of the various means of achieving the necessary frame of mind, which bears with it the germ of victory. The variety of these means has been determined by specific situations, differing one from another, and each time the author, so as to achieve his goal, has had to seek something new in himself or in the circumstances. And each time, be it opening research, the analysis of an adjourned position, or finally, the preparation for a decisive game, the author has sought what is frequently the only possible variation of specific moves, which will lead him to success.

The story of these searchings and finds, these failures and discoveries, is not merely interesting – it is instructive. And in this lies the chief value and originality of the book now before the reader.

Mikhail Tal, ex-World Champion

common property. And even so, I wouldn't exchange for anything those rare happy moments, when a painstakingly prepared trap operates, and you see your unsuspecting opponent advancing confidently towards his doom.

It is difficult to say with complete certainty how I acquired such an approach, such a method of handling the opening. Perhaps it was a matter of character. I would also not rule out that magnetic influence which was made on me in its time by Mikhail Botvinnik's commentary to his game with Paul Keres from the 1941 Match-Tournament for the title of Absolute USSR Champion. In this encounter, Botvinnik as Black succeeded in employing an innovation in a sharp variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, and refuted virtually by force the conclusion held by theory, namely that the resulting position was favourable for White. And although after the game Botvinnik did not gain any further dividends from the analysis of this particular variation, in the psychological sense his gain was considerably greater. Such a defeat had a depressing effect on Keres, and right to the end of the tournament he was unable to recover from this set-back. And yet in this event Keres was justly considered one of Botvinnik's main rivals in the battle for first place!

And much later I realised that I had been drawn along the path of experimenter in the opening, either in preparations for a game or during the course of it, by another incident, which was not especially important in the competitive sense.

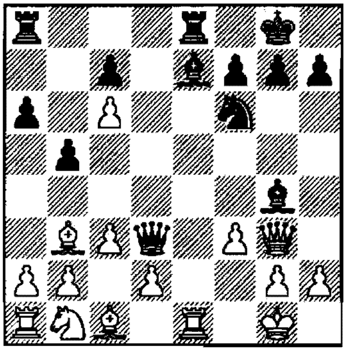
A few days before my 14th birthday, I, as a first category player, met an experienced candidate master Aleksey Ivashin in the Championship of Kuybishev, a large town on the Volga, where I then lived. Although the game lasted 48 moves, its outcome was decided much earlier.

Polugayevsky-Ivashin
Kuybishev Championship 1948
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 exd5 e4

This move has now gone out of practice, as it has been established that White can secure a good game in various ways. But my opponent correctly judged that I was only beginning to comprehend the rudiments of opening play, and that it was unlikely that I would be acquainted with all the subtleties of this sharp variation.

10 dxc6 exf3 11 ♕xf3 ♗g4 12 ♕g3 ♖e8 13 f3 ♕d3



I recall how, at the time, this move seemed to me to be like the explosion of an atomic bomb. The impression was particularly strong, for the further reason that my opponent made it almost without thinking. For a certain time White was able to find at the board the correct and only moves as recommended by theory, but then he lost an important tempo, and incurred a hopeless ending, whereas with correct play he should have maintained a marked advantage.

The game continued:

14 fxg4 ♗c5+ 15 ♖e3 ♘d5 16 ♕f3?

After the approved 16 ♘a3! White repulses Black's swift but rather premature attack. Unfortunately, I learned of this only after the game.

16...♘xe3 17 dxe3 ♖e6! 18 ♗xe6 fxe6

By bringing a further exchange sacrifice to the altar of the attack, Black has opened the f-file, and his lead in development now proves decisive.

19 ♕f1 ♕c2 20 ♘a3

Alas, this no longer brings salvation.

20...♗xa3 21 bxa3 ♖d8 22 ♗b2 ♕xb2 23 ♖d1 ♖d2 24 h3 ♕xc3 25 ♕e1 ♖xd1 26 ♕xd1 ♕xc6, and Black won on move 48.

It was then, more than forty years ago, that I firmly decided to endeavour not to fall into variations prepared by my opponents (of course, it hasn't been possible for me, or for any other grandmaster there has ever been, to avoid this completely), but to spare no time and effort so as to be able myself to set the opponent difficult opening problems as often as possible.

Whether it was this, or something else, that played its part, the role of experimenter became the way for me. And it would be wrong to complain about fate: several times I have managed literally to drag my opponent into forced variations, such that even with maximum ingenuity on his part there has been only one possible outcome. My pre-game preparations have enabled me to set my opponent such problems in the opening that he has had no possibility of coping with them at the board. And even if my opponents should say: 'It's not worth the trouble. You play hundreds, if not thousands of games, and your opening successes can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and besides, they are gained in a strictly limited number of openings,' then against this I would merely remind them of an old truth, both in life and in chess: an exceptional moment is worth more than a year serenely-lived, or a tournament won. For the reason that, at that moment, the quintessence of creativity, or some part of it very dear to one's heart, can suddenly be concentrated.

And another significant comment. I have to admit that, for all the significance of a detailed familiarity with chess information, I nevertheless have never attached much importance to the ability to remember it at all costs, just as I have never had a blind belief in the magical power of the computer 'monster'.

I have always considered more valuable the art of independent searching at the board for non-routine and interesting ideas, often difficult to find. In this respect experimental work in your home laboratory can bring enormous benefits. It not only enriches and develops your general opening culture, but is also an effective way of improving many of your chess thinking qualities, when you try to penetrate into the essence of a particular position. This relates both to the opening phase, and to the middlegame and endgame. On many occasions, at training sessions with my colleagues, I have not felt out of my depth when being obliged to analyse totally unfamiliar opening positions, but have found my way quite well, for example, in rare variations of the Alekhine or Caro-Kann Defences, which had never occurred in my games. Here too I was greatly helped by those endless hours of independent home analysis. In tournament play too I can recall dozens of instances when, finding myself in an unpleasant situation in the opening, on the basis of my developed intuition I was able to find the only correct decisions. It is important that this should be remembered especially by those young players, who are accustomed to acting only 'by the book' and following conventional theoretical set-ups, forgetting about the need for independent research.

And so, let's continue our journey into the past.

1953. As an 18-year-old candidate master, rather young by the standards of the time, I went off to the Championship of the Russian Republic in Saratov, to the first genuinely strong tournament in my life. Up till then I had never played one to one against a master, and here 12 of the 16 competitors were masters, so that, to be frank, I was nervous, and considerably afraid of my famous and experienced opponents. I was afraid of them until I was caught up in the heat of the battle, after which for additional emotions I no longer had either the strength of spirit, or the free time.

At that time I played as Black even fewer openings than I do now. In particular, against 1 d4 only the Meran Defence featured in my repertoire. True, I endeavoured to study it as thoroughly as possible, and even stored up for possible use a little idea, which was destined to receive wide publicity.

In my game with the well-known master Georgy Ilivitsky (White), after a slight transposition of moves the main variation of the Meran Defence arose:

Ilivitsky-Polugayevsky
RSFSR Championship, Saratov 1953
Semi-Slav Defence

1 c4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 d4 c6 4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♗d3 ♘bd7 6 ♘c3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 a6 9 e4 c5 10 d5

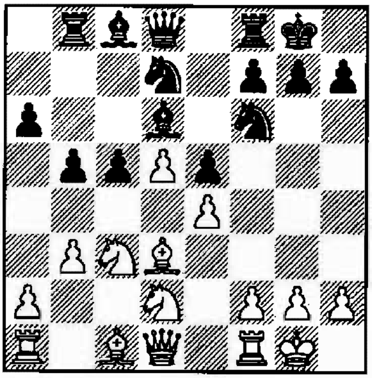
At the time this last move by White had only just come into practice, but it was already quite fashionable. And for Black it is not easy to find a satisfactory plan. Besides, at that time I played not only very energetically, but also effusively, and the prospect of a passive defence in this branch of the 'Meran' did not attract me at all. It followed that counterplay had to be sought, and during my searching I managed – not long before the Championship of the Russian Republic – to hit upon an interesting strategic idea.

10...e5 11 b3 ♗d6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♘d2

It was probably better to do without this move, and play 13 a4 immediately. But White had no idea of his opponent's intention, and planned to play a2-a4 a little later, after first preparing a blockade on the square c4. If he had succeeded in this, Black would have been left in a hopeless position.

13...♖b8!

Not so much to defend b5, which is in any case not possible, but rather the final preparation for a positional pawn sacrifice.



14 a4 c4! 15 bxc4 b4 16 ♘e2 ♘c5 17 ♗c2 a5

Black has achieved his aim. At the cost of a pawn he has seized the square c5, and gained good prospects of an attack on White's queenside. In particular, he now intends to concentrate his forces against the weak pawn at c4. Nevertheless, a pawn is a pawn, and White's hands are by no means tied: he can initiate play on the kingside by the standard advance f2-f4. In short, the position is purely experimental in character, and it is not surprising that later some good plans were found for White. But at the time this game provoked considerable interest, and became the theme for a theoretical discussion. And during play there proved to be more than enough problems for Ilivitsky...

The effect of the innovation in this encounter can be considered exhausted, but I should like nevertheless to give the game in full, and for this reason (if it should appear to anyone that I am deviating from the basic theme, let us consider the following lines to be something in the nature of a lyrical digression).

In chess, as in other types of sport, there are constant discussions about the young, about the changing of the old guard, and about the different generations. The young are condescendingly slapped on the back, then scolded, and then raised almost up to the heavens. In all this, the basic argument used is competitive results: the places occupied, and the points scored. But, you know, in chess there is always a highly objective criterion – the moves of a game. And it is more accurate to compare not the number of wins of players past and present, but the quality of those wins, and not the degree of knowledge, but the degree of individual creativity. I hope I will not be considered immodest, but from the point of view of these criteria, even today there is nothing for which I can reproach that young candidate master who was playing Black. Moreover, being susceptible, like everyone, to the influence of the years spent in chess, in some ways I envy him...

18 ♘g3 ♗a6

Somewhat direct, although consistent. 18...g6 was more cautious.

19 ♘f5 g6 20 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 21 ♖e1

White plans to transfer his rook via e3 to h3, and avoids playing f2-f4. But this is wrong! By continuing 21 g3 followed by ♗b2, f2-f4 and ♘f3, he could have gained more effective counter-chances.

21...♘fd7 22 ♖e3 ♘b6 23 ♕e2 ♖bc8 24 ♖h3 ♖c7

While coolly carrying out his plan, Black at the same time prepares if necessary to defend his kingside.

25 ♗b2 ♖fc8 26 f4 ♘xc4!

A move which some commentators on this game considered over-hasty. World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik, in the chess column that he then wrote in the magazine *Ogonyok*, recommended 26...f6; Lyev Aronin in the USSR Yearbook suggested 26...♘cd7, with the possible variation 27 ♗d3 ♘xc4 28 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 29 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 30 fxe5 ♕c5+ 31 ♕e3 ♖xe4 32 ♕xc5 ♖xc5, which is clearly in Black's favour. Without wishing to contest either of these opinions, I will merely remark that Black settled on the continuation in the game, because he had worked out more or less fully all the subsequent complications.

27 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 28 fxe5!

White, too, is equal to the occasion. 28 ♕xc4 ♘d7 29 fxe5 ♖xc4 30 exd6 ♖xc2 leads to a very difficult position.

28...♕xd5! 29 ♕e3!

In reply to Black's surprise move, White finds a vulnerable spot in his opponent's position – h7.

29...♕e6 30 ♕h6 b3

No turning back!

31 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 32 ♗d1

It was probably stronger to include 32 ♕h8+ ♔e7 33 ♕h4+ ♔e8, and only then 34 ♗d1.

32...♘d3

The battle has reached its height; attack and counter-attack are as though intermingled.

33 ♗a3+

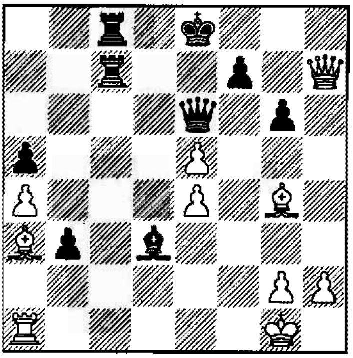
I considered the following variation to be in my favour: 33 ♕h8+ ♔e7 34 ♕f6+ ♕xf6 35 exf6+ ♔d6 36 ♗a3+ ♔e5!, despite the fact that after 37 ♗xb3 ♗a6! White is two pawns up.

33...♔e8 34 ♖xd3

34...♕b6+ was threatened. White therefore prepares a combination, but a nasty surprise awaits him.

34...♗xd3 35 ♗g4

Hoping for 35...♕xg4 36 ♕g8+ ♔d7 37 ♕xf7+ ♔c6 (37...♔d8 38 ♕f8+ ♔d7 39 ♕d6+ ♔e8 40 e6) 38...♕xb3!!, when, despite his extra rook, Black must lose in view of the threat of 39 ♖c1+.



35...f5!!

Botvinnik called this 'a move of fearful strength'. White's queen comes under the attack of both black rooks, and 36 exf6 fails to the intermediate check 36...♕b6+.

36 ♕h8+ ♔d7 37 ♕h7+

The immediate retreat, 37 ♕h3, offered slightly better chances of saving the game. Now, however, Black's counter-attack is irresistible.

37...♔c6 38 ♕h3 ♗xe4 39 ♗d1 ♔b7 40 ♕xb3+ ♕xb3 41 ♗xb3 ♖c3 42 ♗d1 ♖xa3! 43 ♖xa3 ♖c1 44 ♖g3 ♖xd1+ White resigns.

Such a victory over one of the strongest Soviet masters of that time, several times a competitor in the USSR Championship, merely strengthened my resolve to seek and to experiment. Besides, in that Championship of the Russian Republic I was also successful in the competitive sense: I took second place, and by one and a half points surpassed the master norm....

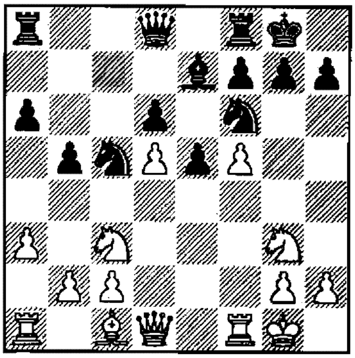
In 1959 in the 26th USSR Championship at Tbilisi, in my game with **Nikolai Krogius** I ended up in a variation of the Sicilian Defence which was topical at that time.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♗b3 ♗e7 8 0-0 b5 9 a3 0-0 10 f4 ♗b7 11 f5 e5 12 ♘de2 ♘bd7 13 ♘g3 ♘c5

Here Krogius, who was White, carried out the basic strategic idea of the variation, the seizure of the square e4: **14 ♗d5 ♗xd5 15 exd5 a5 16 ♗g5! ♘cd7 17 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 18 ♘ce4**, and gained an appreciable advantage. The effect of the manoeuvre employed by White was very strong, and the whole variation immediately came under a cloud.

Can Black do anything to counter White's basic plan? Since the Sicilian Defence came into my sphere of opening interests, I got down to analysis, and discovered that the root of Black's troubles lay in the move 15...a5. It turned out that this was both a loss of time, and also an error in the choice of goal. After some rather painstaking work, an adequate antidote was found, and at the same time it was diagnosed that White incurs an inferior position!

In my game with **Yuri Kotkov** from the 1959 Championship of the Russian Republic, Black reaped the fruits of his research, by employing the accurate move order in this position:



15...♖c8! 16 ♗g5 ♘cd7! 17 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 18 ♘ce4 ♖c4!

Only now is Black's intention revealed.

He 'dislodges' the white knight from its dominating post at e4, since 19 ♕d3 fails to 19...♖d4, and then builds up his heavy pieces on the c-file, sends forward his e-pawn, and gains a won position.

Thus was the truth established: the variation is dubious not for Black, but for White.

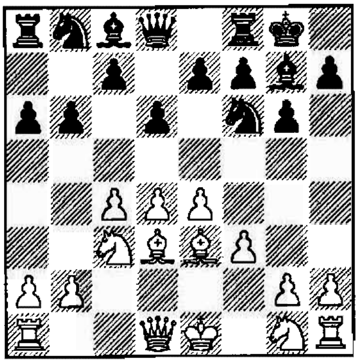
In my game with **Eduard Gufeld** from the 1960 USSR Championship Semi-Final in Vilnius, I ran up against an interesting innovation in the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian Defence.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 b6 7 ♗d3

I knew that now the 'thematic' 7...c5 was refuted by 8 e5!, when Black can resign, as was shown by Bronstein's game with Lutikov in the same year: after 8...♘e8 9 ♗e4 ♘c7 10 ♗xa8 ♘xa8 11 ♘ge2 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 dxe5 13 ♘b3 White has a material and a positional advantage.

But my opponent introduced a significant correction into the variation, by playing **7...a6?!** In this way Black prepares the advance ...c7-c5, and, in the event of the centre being closed, the move ...a7-a6 will prove useful. During the game I was unable to find a successful response to Black's rejoinder. After **8 ♘ge2 c5 9 d5 e6 10 0-0 exd5 11 exd5 ♘bd7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 ♕d2 b5!** Gufeld obtained an excellent position, and won. In my game with **Yefim Geller** in the USSR Team Championship I attempted at the board to improve White's play by the immediate 8 d5, but even then Black, by continuing 8...c5 9 dxc6 ♘xc6 10 ♘ge2 ♘e5, gained excellent counter-chances.

To be honest, I began to harbour a certain 'malice' against this variation, and decided to make a thorough study of it. In my preparations for the 28th USSR Championship, in which a number of 'King's Indian' players were competing, I succeeded in discovering the Achilles' heel of the move 7...a6. And in the very first round this variation arose on the board! My opponent **Leonid Stein** knew all the games played previously with this line, and was not averse to following any one of the paths trodden: each of them was perfectly playable for Black. But...



8 ♘ge2 c5 9 e5!

It turns out that Black's seventh move has not in fact prevented the break-through in the centre. The game continued:

9...♘fd7 (9...dxe5 10 dxe5 ♘fd7 11 ♗e4 ♖a7 12 f4 is clearly favourable for White) **10 exd6! exd6 11 0-0 ♘c6 12 ♗c2 ♗b7 13 ♕d2 ♘f6 14 ♖ad1**, and White had a clear advantage, which he converted into a win. This game effectively put 7...a6 out of commission. At any rate, it came to be adopted only extremely rarely in major events.

In 1965, the 33rd USSR Championship in Tallinn caused me much anxiety. I started well, scoring 8 points out of 10 in the first half of the tournament, and was not unjustified in hoping for the very highest success. But then something unaccountable occurred. In the next five rounds I didn't manage to win a single game, and misfortunes piled one on top of another. Suddenly the most promising positions ceased to 'win themselves', and however much I tried at the board, the logic in my play completely disappeared, and indecision appeared at critical moments.

It was essential that I promptly take some radical measures, but no one could suggest to me what they should be. Besides, in the 16th round my opponent was **Semion Furman**, who not without justification was called the World Champion in play with White. With Black against him, one could normally hope for a draw at best, and if the situation had been different I wouldn't have thought of trying for more. But on this occasion I was thinking only in terms of victory, since only this would maintain my chances of first place.

How was I to play? Surprise him? But how? To play positions known to theory against Furman was pointless: he knew them like the back of his hand. This meant that there were two courses open to me. I could either deviate immediately from the well-trodden paths, which is normally fraught with the danger of ending up in an inferior position, or else I could attempt to find something new in familiar positions.

As if by order, before the 16th round the contestants had a free day. Normally I devote such days entirely to relaxation, but here I changed my own rule, and despite my great nervous fatigue, spent the whole day working.

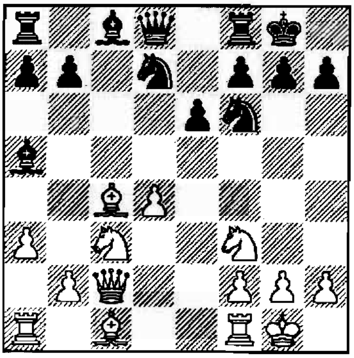
Furman knew that in reply to his favourite 1 d4 I normally played the Nimzo-Indian Defence. And so, picking up Taimanov's monograph on this opening, I began turning over the pages, taking note only of those variations which were considered unsatisfactory for Black. Suppose I managed to find something! My examination took in one variation, a second, a third... Stop! Some rather lengthy reflection, and... Had I really struck gold?! I went even deeper into the analysis, and finally breathed a sigh of relief. There could be no doubt: a second birth of the variation would take place.

This is the variation in question:

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗d3 d5 7 0-0 ♘bd7, and now **8 a3 ♗a5**.

Theory reckoned that in this position White gains a serious advantage after either 9 ♕c2 a6 10 b3 ♗c7 11 ♗b2, or **9 ♕c2 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 cxd4 11 exd4**. In the second of these variations there was a reference to the game Petrosian-Moiseev from the 19th USSR Championship.

Nevertheless, it was this position that appeared to me by no means so unpromising. Meanwhile Furman, without much thought, went in for it.



Here Black made what was at first sight a totally illogical move, **11...♗xc3!!** Illogical, because three moves earlier he avoided this exchange. Nowadays this is all well known, but at the time, to the accompaniment of the chess clock, Furman was unable to solve all the resulting problems.

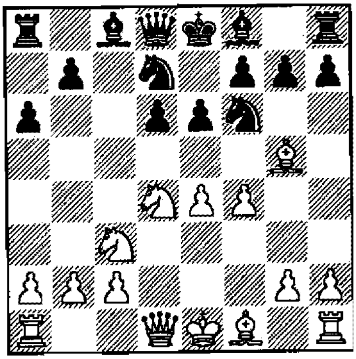
The game continued:

12 ♕xc3 (practice has shown that after 12 bxc3 b6 Black again has good prospects) **12...b6! 13 ♘e5 ♗b7 14 ♕e3 ♕c7 15 ♗e2 ♖fd8 16 ♖e1 ♖ac8 17 ♗f1 ♕d6 18 b3 ♕d5 19 a4 ♘xe5 20 dxe5 ♘e4 21 ♕f4 ♕xb3**, and Black was close to a win.

The innovation brought me an important point, and the variation 7...♘bd7 began to be widely practised. For five years this revived scheme served Black faithfully and truly, and was taken up by many leading grandmasters. And it was only in 1969 that White managed to find the key to it: 9 cxd5 exd5 10 b4! cxb4 11 ♘b5!

I cannot avoid recalling the 'secret war' between **David Bronstein** and myself. The variation of the Sicilian Defence **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♗e7 8 ♕f3 ♕c7** has always obsessed me. Some 20-25 years ago the variation was highly topical, just as it is now, and provoked a mass of sharp discussions, both in the press, and in practice. Many games continued 9 0-0-0 ♘bd7 10 g4 b5 11 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 12 g5 ♘d7 13 a3 ♖b8 14 ♗h3 or 14 f5, when White's attack appeared too threatening. What could Black do to oppose this? After all, he had not made, essentially, a single mistake! Perhaps he should try to change his move order, which is normally so critical in double-edged openings? And my thinking developed along the following lines: what move could Black temporarily do without, so as to economise on a tempo, and by playing ...b4, be the first to take active measures?

What if, instead of 7...♗e7, Black plays 7...♘bd7 ?

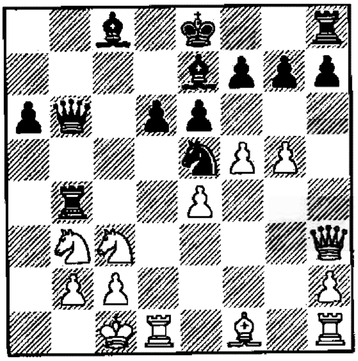


Of course, there is nothing here that is particularly unexpected; this had been played before. But at the time Black avoided playing it for two reasons: White had a pleasant choice between the energetic 8 ♕f3 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5 10 e5! ♗b7 11 ♕h3! dxe5 12 ♘xe6!, and the quieter but no less dangerous 8 ♗c4. And it was this that I secretly 'decided' not to agree with.

In 1967 I managed to find the time necessary for some painstaking work on my idea. But before analysing these two continuations, the main point had to be cleared up: did Black gain any advantage if White responded to 7...♘bd7 just as he would against 7...♗e7 ? If not, it simply wasn't worth the trouble...

And my analysis proceeded along the following lines:

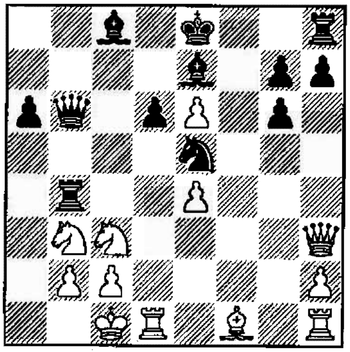
7...♘bd7 8 ♕f3 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5 10 a3 ♖b8 11 g4 b4 12 axb4 ♖xb4 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 g5 ♘d7 15 f5 (otherwise White is too slow in fighting for the initiative) **15...♘e5 16 ♕h3 ♕b6 17 ♘b3 ♗e7!**



In my analysis of this position, in the first instance I considered **18 g6**. The first impression is that after **18...fxg6 19 fxe6**, with the threat of 20 ♘d5, White can feel happy with his position. But careful analysis enabled me to find a tactical stroke, which radically changed the assessment.

(see diagram next page)

19...♖xb3!! 20 cxb3 ♕xb3 21 ♕g3 (21 ♘d5? ♗g5+) **21...♗xe6**



Further fairly straightforward analysis quickly convinced me that the exchange sacrifice radically altered the picture, and that White's position was barely defensible.

Thus it was established that if White's play follows the normal pattern, the transposition of moves gives Black a menacing attack instead of a difficult defence.

It is probably not worth delving into that truly tropical jungle of variations, through which I had to force my way during the analysis of the two other more critical replies to 7...♘bd7 (8 ♗c4 and 8 ♕f3 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5 10 e5): after all, this is not a reference book on the openings, nor is it a monograph on the Rauzer Attack in the Sicilian Defence. I will merely say that, on concluding my work, which lasted several weeks, somewhere in my heart I cherished the hope that my analysis of the position in the diagram would not be in vain.

And my findings came into use surprisingly quickly! In the Autumn of that year, in the Moscow Jubilee Tournament of grandmasters and masters, David Bronstein himself, one of the cleverest and most erudite players in the world, fell into this variation. All the 21(!) moves given above occurred in our game, and it was only for decency's sake that at the board I spent several minutes in thought, not wishing to shock my opponent by demonstratively rapid play.

My prepared variation decided the outcome of the game, which continued: **22 ♘e2 0-0! 23 ♕xb3 ♗xb3 24 ♖d4 ♘f3 25 ♖b4 ♗g5+ 26 ♔b1 ♘d2+ 27 ♔a1 ♗c4 28 ♘f4 ♘xf1 29 ♘h3 ♘e3 30 ♖xc4 ♘xc4**, and Black realised his advantage without difficulty.

It was here that I should have realised that David Ionovich would not 'forgive' me this opening unpleasantness, and would do everything possible to try to gain his 'revenge'. I suffered the answering blow under the following circumstances.

In the 35th USSR Championship at Kharkov, **Mark Taimanov** as Black adopted against me the following order of moves in the English Opening: **1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 g3 g6**.

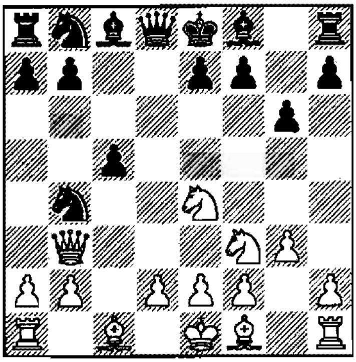
I continued with the standard 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0, and the attempt to obtain an advantage by 8 ♕b3 ♘c7 9 d3 ♘c6 10 ♕a4 ♘e6 11 ♘g5 ♕d4 proved unsuccessful. On arriving at my hotel after the game, I discovered that White can make an important improvement to the variation, by playing 6 ♕b3 instead of 6 ♗g2. It was only four years later that I managed to test this idea in an encounter with Semion Furman, who had not failed to notice the move order employed in Kharkov by Taimanov. Especially since during that Championship Furman and Taimanov had been sharing a room.

My game with **Furman** occurred in the USSR Team Championship at Rostov-on-Don in 1971. I was playing for the 'Lokomotiv' team, and Furman for the Central Army Sports Club. The move 6 ♕b3!? came as a surprise to my opponent, who responded with 6...♘b4. By continuing 7 ♘e4 b6 8 ♗g2 ♗e6 9 ♕c3 f6 10 a3 ♘d5 11 ♕c2 ♘d7 12 d4 ♖c8 13 0-0, White gained a promising position, and triumphed in the subsequent battle.

Two months passed, and I again reached the position after Black's fifth move, this time playing against Bronstein. As I now remember it, before my next move I deliberated over whether or not to make the apparently approved 6 ♕b3. Common sense, and some sort of self-preservation instinct suggested, even demanded, that I should avoid trouble, and play the 'old-fashioned' 6 ♗g2. But, in the first place, I am accustomed to believing my analysis, and secondly, I completely failed to take into account the possibility of a 'blood feud' on Bronstein's part. A role was possibly also played by simple curiosity: what could my opponent have prepared in this variation?

Be that as it may, but events developed at lightning speed:

6 ♕b3 ♘b4 7 ♘e4



'What's this? Surely he isn't following in Furman's footsteps?' was all I had time to think, before Bronstein with his next move disclosed his intentions.

7...♗g7!?

This, it turns out, is the point! A typical Bronstein pawn sacrifice! Although it may seem paradoxical, at that moment I began thinking not about the position, nor about the problems facing me in this game, but about the famous Bronstein-Keres encounter at the finish of the 1950 Candidates Tournament. A completely different opening, a different type of position, and even different colours, but how close that game was to ours in psychological content and in style of battle! Both there, and here, Bronstein was happy to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative, immediately transforming his opponent into the defending side.

I didn't consider the dilemma – whether or not to take the pawn – for long. It was essential to accept the gift, since otherwise White's opening venture would be clearly bad.

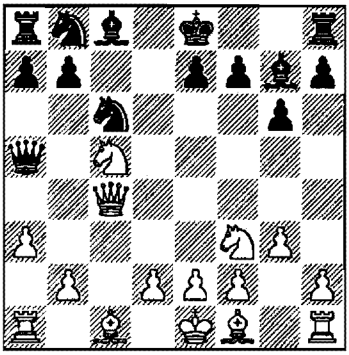
But after **8 ♘xc5 ♕a5** I had to give the matter serious thought. After all, if you simply glance at the position, you cannot help being puzzled: for what, strictly speaking, has Black voluntarily parted with material? But the more I looked into the position, the less it inspired optimism in me. Difficulties emerged, and literally piled up one on top of another. How was I to choose the correct continuation, if under the ticking of the clock it was impossible to calculate everything, and very difficult to assess the mass of resulting positions?

I quickly realised that 9 ♘d3 ♘xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♘a6 or 10...♘c6 gives Black a strong initiative, and I began examining 9 a3. But what should I do in the event of 9...♘8c6 ? The threat against c2 (...♗f5) is highly disagreeable, and I felt relieved when I discovered, in reply to 9...♘8c6, the move 10 ♕c4, at the same time vacating the square b3 for the retreat of the knight. On 10...b5 White has the possibility of 11 ♕e4 ♗f5 12 axb4! And so, I decided on:

9 a3, driving back the annoying black knight. Somewhat to my surprise, Bronstein sank into thought, but then very calmly played **9...♘4c6**.

(Jumping ahead, I should mention that after the game David Ionovich informed me that it was 9...♘8c6 that he had prepared at home, but at the board, on seeing 10 ♕c4, he had thought better of it.)

White again had a difficult choice to make, between 10 ♘e4, 10 ♕c2 and 10 ♕c4. There came into my head various lines of the type 10 ♕c2 ♘b4 11 ♕d1 (11 ♕c4!?) 11...♗f5 12 ♘b3 ♕c7! 13 axb4 ♗c2. I similarly did not care for the more serious 10 ♕c2 ♗f5 11 e4 ♗g4. In the end White plumped for **10 ♕c4**, but here too Bronstein succeeded in setting up strong pressure, utilising his b-pawn as a battering-ram.



10...b5 11 ♕h4 b4 12 ♘d3 ♘a6! 13 ♗g2 ♗d7! (13...0-0? 14 ♘g5) **14 0-0 ♖c8 15 ♘de1** (otherwise there is no way of freeing the queenside) **15...♘c5 16 ♘c2 ♘b3 17 ♖b1** (17 axb4 ♕b5!) **17...♕c5 18 ♘e3 ♘cd4**, and White literally suffocated in his own territory. After the game Bronstein smiled, content: he had landed the counter-blow, and had fully settled his old opening score with me.

When, on the conclusion of the game, we sat down to analyse it, I had not yet cooled down after the battle, and began impetuously trying to demonstrate the total incorrectness of the pawn sacrifice. I said that White had not done anything 'unlawful', such that Black should be able to give up material for nothing. I began giving various lines, trying to refute Black's venture immediately. And each time Bronstein would methodically comment on what was happening: 'It's not so simple, it's not so simple. You have an extra pawn, but I have extra space!'

We even continued our discussion on the way to our hotel. And after ascending by lift to our floor, we concluded a gentlemen's agreement: to play this variation again, should the opportunity present itself, and thus continue our argument under tournament conditions, in which a move cannot be taken back.

Later, incidentally, when I had cooled down and had begun to analyse calmly, I realised that if Black's innovation was to be refuted, there was no way this could have been done during the first encounter. To solve at the board all the problems facing White was in practice a hopeless task. And with each new hour spent on analysis, it became more and more clear to me that Bronstein's clever discovery gives Black perfectly reasonable compensation in the majority of variations. At any rate, the explosive power in the innovation proved more than sufficient for one game.

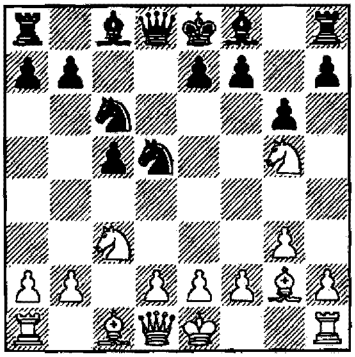
I have related all this so as to convince the reader once again of the delicate role played by the experimenter.

As evidence of this I should like to give an instance from one of my more recent games. In 1979, not long before the start of the Interzonal Tournament in Riga, I played in Holland a short training match with **Jan Timman**.

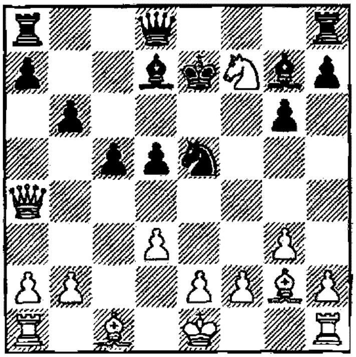
In one of the games an unusual variation of the English Opening occurred: **1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 g6 7 ♘g5**.

(*see diagram next page*)

White's last move did not come as a surprise to me; I had analysed it at home, and had a specially prepared idea.



After **7...e6 8 ♘ge4 b6 9 d3 ♗g7 10 ♕a4** Black replied **10...♗d7**, intending in the event of **11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 ♘d6+** (in the game Timman 'believed' me and replied 12 ♘c3, when 12...♘d4 secured Black the advantage) **12...♔e7 13 ♘xf7 ♘e5**



to trap the white knight by 14 ♘xd8 ♗xa4.

And then a whole ten years later – I was so sure of my discovery, that since that time I had not forced myself even once to look again at the position – at a tournament in New York, 1989, **Roman Djindjihashvili** as White went in for this variation, and in the diagram position played **14 ♗g5+!** (instead of 14 ♘xd8), and to my horror I discovered that all these years I had been labouring under a faulty idea.

True, 'Djin' subsequently played badly: 14...♔xf7 15 ♗xd5+ ♔e8 16 ♕h4 ♕b8 17 0-0 h6 18 ♗f6 ♗xf6 19 ♕xf6 ♖f8 20 ♕g7 ♗c6, the play became more complicated, and not without my opponent's help I even managed to win this game. But had White first played 15 ♕f4+! ♗f6, and only then 16 ♗xd5+, Black would have had to resign, since on 16...♔g7 there follows 17 ♗h6 mate.

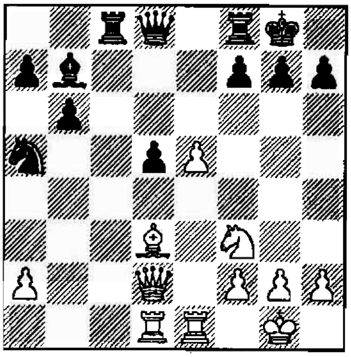
This demonstrates the tragic consequences that can result from an experiment, if a player gives in to the first temptation and does not make a thorough appraisal of the finest details of the position.

I should like to describe two further incidents which I consider to be rather out of the ordinary. Early in 1969, on the outskirts of Moscow in the small town of Dubna, which is justifiably called the Physicists' Capital, I was preparing for my match with grandmaster Alexander Zaitsev for the title of Champion of the Soviet Union. Boris Spassky was also there, preparing for his match for the World Crown with Tigran Petrosian. Since ethics demanded that we should remain neutral with regard to each other, we decided not to touch on specific problems of pre-match preparation, but simply to work together on openings that interested us both, and which we both employed.

Among the schemes we looked at was the following variation of the Tarrasch Defence Deferred: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♗b4+ 9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2.**

Theory states that the resulting position is level. But we managed to find a very interesting plan, and to reinforce it with specific calculations. In doing so, we proceeded on the assumption that Black should play logically, making the most sensible moves.

And so, **10...0-0 11 ♗c4 ♘c6 12 0-0 b6 13 ♖ad1! ♗b7 14 ♖fe1 ♘a5** (isn't it true that this looks the most natural?) **15 ♗d3 ♖c8 16 d5! exd5 17 e5!**



It was with this unexpected pawn sacrifice that we associated the whole of our subsequent analysis, which showed that White's position is very strong. We got carried away, and advanced further and further, analysing the possible continuations move by move. Soon our advance was halted: the variation concluded, as they say, in mate to the black king...

Of course, Spassky and I agreed that either of us had the right to employ this analysis at the first convenient opportunity.

In my match with Zaitsev I did not require it. Later in the year, the position after White's 14th move was reached in the 5th game of the Spassky-Petrosian match. The then World Champion, who possessed a unique gift for sensing danger from afar, played 14...♖c8 immediately, instead of the suggested 14...♘a5, and thus avoided the main threat, although after 15 d5 exd5 16 ♗xd5 he was still unable to save the game.

I was fortunate enough to be able to 'publish' the entire variation six months later, in the second round of the 37th USSR Championship in Moscow. My opponent was ex-World Champion **Mikhail Tal**.

It has to be said that I awoke that morning with very mixed feelings. A loss to Semion Furman at the start had left me dispirited, and, what's more, I myself was largely to blame. One shouldn't in general play passively, but this is particularly so against Furman with Black. My disappointment was deepened by the fact that the Championship had the status of a Zonal Tournament, and that I had never yet managed to 'break through' to the Interzonal. Surely I wasn't going to fail again here?

It was this second thought that put me in the mood for a most uncompromising battle with everyone, even with Tal. Therefore, so as to 'erase' my bitter disappointment, I sat down at the board as early as possible that morning. What should I play? I remembered my analysis with Spassky, which had not been fully utilised, and decided to correct certain details, and to work over one or two small points.

It was while I was doing this that grandmaster Yefim Geller called in to see me. He was surprised to see on my board a position from deep into the middlegame.

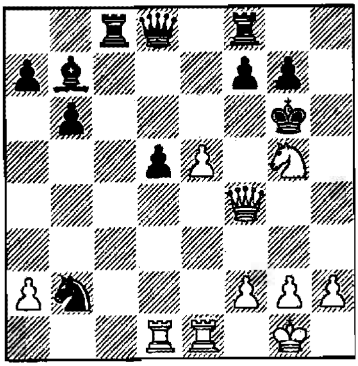
'It will very probably occur in my game this evening,' I said, forestalling his question.

Yefim Petrovich later related how that evening, during the round, he saw the position which had been reached in my game, and tried to remember where he had encountered it before. On glancing at me, he suddenly remembered everything, and couldn't believe his eyes...

Yes, 25 entire moves, devised and 'polished up' beforehand, occurred in my encounter with Tal! The former World Champion, who considered that all of Petrosian's troubles in his 5th match game with Spassky had stemmed from the fact that the white bishop had not been driven from c4 in time, played 13...♘a5, and after 14 ♗d3 ♗b7 15 ♖fe1 calmly played 15...♖c8, thus ending up in the main variation.

From the position in the previous diagram, events developed as follows:

17...♘c4 (if 17...♖c6, then 18 ♘d4, with strong pressure) **18 ♕f4 ♘b2** (attempting to exchange off the dangerous bishop; after 18...h6 19 ♕f5 White has a formidable attack) **19 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 20 ♘g5+ ♔g6**



The first impression is that nothing comes of White's attack, but he has at his disposal a prepared move of terrible strength.

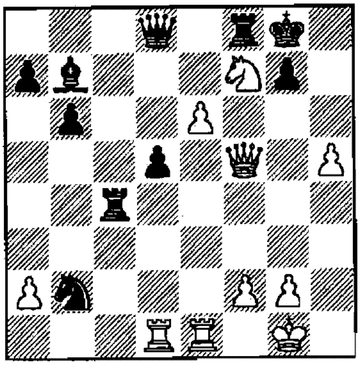
21 h4!!

This is the point of the combination. Of course, to find the whole of the subsequent lengthy variation was possible only with prepared analysis. I think that it was only here that Tal realised that he was battling under unequal conditions, but there was already no way out. Hanging over the black king is the threat of 22 h5+! ♔xh5 23 g4+ ♔g6 24 ♕f5+ ♔h6 25 ♕h7+ ♔xg5 26 ♕h5+ ♔f4 27 ♕f5 mate. 21...f5 fails to save Black, on account of 22 ♖d4!, with the same idea of 23 h5+ or 23 ♕g3. Black's reply is therefore forced :

21...♖c4 22 h5+ ♔h6 23 ♘xf7+ ♔h7 24 ♕f5+ ♔g8 25 e6!

It was this position that Geller saw in my room that morning. And yet 25 moves have already been made!

Now on 25...♕e7 the piquant 26 h6! is decisive. In addition, Black was already on the threshold of severe time trouble, whereas White had spent literally only a few minutes, and most of those on the initial moves.



25...♕f6 26 ♕xf6 gxf6 27 ♖d2

The immediate 27 ♘d6 is more tempting, but the move played is perfectly sufficient to win.

27...♖c6 28 ♖xb2 ♖e8 (28...♗c8 was slightly the lesser evil) **29 ♘h6+ ♔h7 30 ♘f5 ♖cxe6 31 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 32 ♖c2 ♖c6 33 ♖e2! ♗c8 34 ♖e7+ ♔h8 35 ♘h4 f5 36 ♘g6+ ♔g8 37 ♖xa7 Black resigns.**

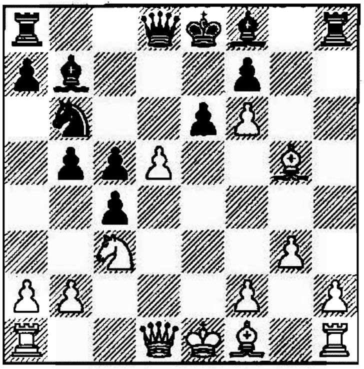
Another instance occurred in my game with Eugenio Torre, Moscow 1981. But it was preceded by an interesting story.

Early in 1977, at the Voronovo holiday home on the outskirts of Moscow, I was preparing with my trainer, grandmaster Vladimir Bagirov (then an international master) for my Candidates Match with Henrique Mecking.

During my opening preparations I ran up against a serious problem: what to do as White against the Meran Defence? The Brazilian grandmaster had frequently and successfully employed the Meran, and all my attempts to 'breach' this reliable defence for Black were ineffective, even though I was familiar with all the subtleties of this variation. In addition, Bagirov was considered one of the leading experts on it in the world.

But what if White doesn't go into the Meran Variation? Then there is nothing else for him, other than to switch to the very sharp Botvinnik Variation. It was here that the idea occurred to me: why not avoid the familiar paths and change course, by choosing this mind-boggling variation, which earlier had never occurred in my games; in other words, to strike a blow at the very 'heart'. I was very impressed by the thought that Mecking would be caught unawares.

Naturally, during our sessions I began a detailed investigation of all the lines of the Botvinnik Variation. But in the main direction the work suddenly began to 'skid'. I was unable to break the deadlock in the position arising after **1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♘b6**



This position had become the object of sharp debate among chess theorists. I stubbornly sought a refutation for White, since I considered Black's actions to be clearly dubious. Bagirov, however, was of a different opinion; he had already reached this position in a tournament, and it had brought him success as Black.

The days passed, but there was no progress in the analysis: Black's fortress seemed impregnable. On the tenth day Bagirov was unable to restrain himself any longer: 'Enough, isn't it time to call a halt, we are just wasting time!' At heart I realised that he was right, but my mind protested.

'All right, Volodya,' I agreed, 'be patient a little longer; if on the fifteenth day I don't find a solution, I swear that I won't look at this position again!'

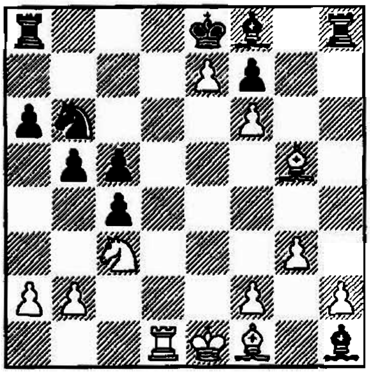
In the next few days we studied some other openings, and I continued analysing the Botvinnik Variation on my own and only during the night. Every morning Volodya would look inquiringly at me: 'Well?' It was then that I decided to resort to a well-tried procedure: for a certain time to completely switch off from the task and create a kind of 'hunger' before the decisive night. In the next few hours, gritting my teeth, I tried from all sides to 'twist' the utterly exhausted position, and all sorts of ridiculous moves began suggesting themselves. Suddenly a 'mad' idea struck me: why not sacrifice a whole rook, in the end there is nothing to lose! Instantly there flashed through my mind a serious of moves, developing this idea, and I delved deeper and deeper into the unknown... Some time after three o'clock in the morning, totally exhausted, I leant back in my chair, completely staggered by the realisation that a miracle had occurred: the mystery, that for so long had escaped me, had been solved! Finally logic and reason had triumphed.

Coming to, I hurried off to the sleeping Bagirov. Waking him up, I quietly stated: 'That's it, the variation has been buried...' 'How? It can't have!' thundered my trainer who, despite being only half awake, already realised what I was talking about.

We returned to my room, where the familiar position was already set up on the board. The following obvious moves were quickly made: **14 dxe6 ♕xd1+ 15 ♖xd1 ♗xh1 16 e7 a6**

(*see diagram next page*)

And here, after pausing for an instant, I triumphantly pushed forward my h-pawn:



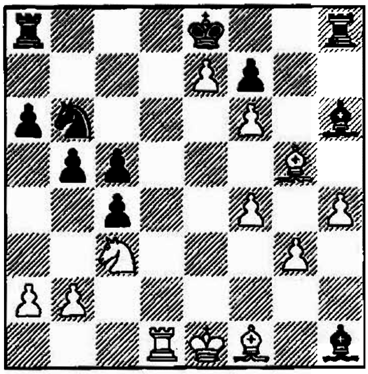
17 h4!! Bagirov froze in complete perplexity, staggered by what had happened. His game with Belyavsky in the Four Teams Championship, Moscow 1981, had gone 17 exf8=♕+ ♔xf8 18 ♖d6 ♖b8 19 ♗e3 ♖h5 with chances for both sides.

We began a careful examination of the possibilities, which in certain instances extended nearly as far as move 40. When our analysis was complete, my colleague sadly remarked: 'You have done a terrible thing, you have put an end to my variation. What will I do now?' With difficulty I reassured him: 'Don't worry, possibly no one will ever know.'

In the very first game of the match with Mecking I went in for 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5. My opponent sank into serious thought, intuitively sensing the danger, and instead of the critical 5...dxc4 played 5...h6. Without a doubt, this was something of an opening success, especially since in the match Mecking no longer ventured to play 1...d5, and was thus deprived of one of his favourite openings. But a bitter taste remained with me, since the enormous explosive power of the innovation had failed to operate...

Had it been wasted? The notebook with its secret jottings awaited its hour. And it came – four years later! At the International Tournament in Moscow, 1981, in my game with **Eugenio Torre** the long-awaited position in the last diagram was reached. Now came the planned:

17 h4!! ♗h6 18 f4!!



Another unpleasant surprise for Black. Having given up a rook, White has no intention of regaining the lost material, but contents himself with the fact that the rook at h8 is not destined to come into play for some time.

18...b4 19 ♖d6!

This too is the result of that same home preparation (jumping ahead, I have to admit that the position was analysed as far as move 30 of the present game). Had White retreated with 19 ♘b1, Black would have been alright, whereas now the knight has available the d1 square, from where it can immediately aim for the centre.

19...♖b8

After 19...bxc3 20 ♖xb6 cxb2 (if 20...c2 21 ♔d2 ♔d7 22 ♗xc4 ♗e4, White wins by the seemingly paradoxical 23 ♖xa6!) 21 ♗xc4 followed by ♖xb2 Black loses due to the weakness of f7 and the amazing helplessness of his rooks. Moreover, after placing his rook on the d-file, White can even exchange bishops and play a unique 'three-rook' ending!

After lengthy thought the Philippine grandmaster found the best chance.

20 ♘d1 ♗xg5 21 fxg5 ♘d5

Preventing ♘e3, and simultaneously preparing to give up the knight for the e- and f-pawns.

22 ♗xc4 ♘xe7 23 fxe7 ♔xe7 24 ♖f6!

It is much more important to prevent the rook at h8 from coming into play, than to go after the a-pawn.

24...♖hf8 25 ♘e3

25 ♘f2 followed by ♘d3 is also quite good, but I did not like the fact that, after the capture on c5, the white pieces do not defend one another, and in certain cases can be left 'hanging'. Therefore, instead of the c5 pawn, White attacks the important d5 and f5 squares.

25...♗e4 26 ♖xa6

Now, with the e-file securely blocked and the black rook unable to come into play from e8, White reestablishes material equality, maintaining a highly significant positional advantage and excellent winning chances.

26...♖bd8 27 ♖f6

27 h5 suggests itself, but at the board I refrained from making this committing advance, due to the possibility after 27...♖g8 28 g6 of Black giving up the exchange by 28...fxg6 29 ♗xg8 ♖xg8, when, although White is a pawn up, it may prove no easy matter to realise it.

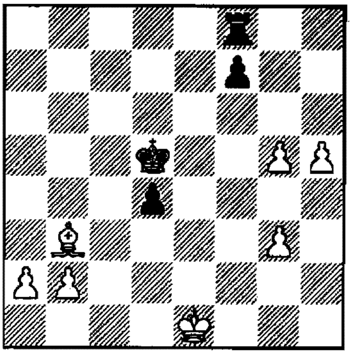
Therefore the game continues in positional vein.

27...♖d6 28 ♖f4 ♖d4 29 h5

Now 28...♖g8 is no longer possible, and Black tries to disentangle himself.

29...♗d3 30 ♘d5+ ♔d6 31 ♖xd4 cxd4 32 ♗b3 ♗c2 33 ♗xc2 ♔xd5 34 ♗b3+?

A mistake, which could have cancelled out all White's achievements. He could have won with the simple 34 h6 followed by 35 h7 and the advance of the king into the centre. In addition, Black would be unable to keep his king at d5, since he would be threatened with 36 g6, and if 36...fxg6 37 ♗b3+ and 38 ♗g8.



34...♔e5 35 g4 ♔f4?

In time trouble Black fails to take the excellent chance granted him by White – 35...d3!! (with the bishop at c2 this move would not have been possible). Now on 36 g6 fxg6 37 hxg6 he retreats his king to f6, while after 36 ♔d2 ♔d4! 37 g6 fxg6 38 hxg6 ♖f2+ (or 36 h6 ♔f4 37 ♗xf7 ♔e3!) he has powerful counterplay, and it is White who has to think in terms of saving the game.

36 g6 ♔e3

On 36...d3 White has 37 ♔d2, while after 36...fxg6 37 hxg6 the pawn reaches the queening square. But in the game too, Black is not able to create a counterattack using mating threats.

37 g7 ♖c8 38 ♔f1

38 h6 is also good enough.

38...d3 39 ♔g2 ♔f4 40 h6

In this hopeless position **Black lost on time**.

At the risk of seeming immodest, I would venture to suggest that this prepared variation has no precedent in the history of chess.

It goes without saying that an innovation lasting 25 moves or more is a rarity, but it once again emphasises what a great return – both competitive and creative – a player can expect from searching, and from experimenting. It hardly has to be said that, in itself, such a success far exceeds the disappointment from other, less successful attempts, and that it is quite capable of inspiring a player, as, for example, the game with Tal inspired me in that USSR Championship.

Finally, it does much to explain why I devoted so many years and so much effort to the opening variation that will be the subject of the following chapter.

2. *The Birth of a Variation*

THE FIRST TIME that the 'Polugayevsky Variation' occurred in my official tournament practice was early in 1959, in a game with Alexander Nikitin from the 26th USSR Championship. In April of that year the variation was then employed against the Czech master J. Fabian in the International Tournament at Marianske-Lazne, and in the summer – in a training game during preparations by the Russian Republic team for the USSR Spartakiad. Then, the number of games in which the variation was adopted began to grow in a geometric progression. But its real birth occurred much earlier, roughly at the time when, on hearing about the move 7...b5, I began working on it, if I remember correctly, under the following circumstances.

In the 1950s the chess-playing Ivashin family was widely known in Kuybishev. Its leader was Aleksey Ivashin, a strong and experienced candidate master, who participated in numerous events in the Russian Republic and the USSR. His sister Natalia was Lady Champion of the town and of the region on several occasions, and played in Championships of the Russian Republic. Their mother and father were also fascinated by chess, and when a tournament of chess-playing families was once held in our country, the Ivashins performed very successfully in it.

For many years the Ivashins' home was open to Kuybishev chess players. We gathered there practically every day, played a great deal, analysed, generously exchanged ideas, and equally generously demolished any proposed innovations. One of the most authoritative analysts amongst us was considered to be the owner of the flat, Aleksey Ivashin, in effect my first trainer, to whom I am greatly indebted.

At that time (approximately 1956-7) a well-known master, Yuri Shaposhnikov, moved to Kuybishev. I don't recall exactly how it happened, but during one of our analysis sessions in the Ivashins' flat, Shaposhnikov and I began talking about the move 7...b5 (after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4). This had been played at the International Tournament in Ploesti in 1957 by Nikolai Krogius against the Rumanian master Reicher. It is curious that the first time this move had been employed was by Rumanian players in events in their own country. But both they and Krogius made this typical Sicilian move on general grounds, and did not associate it with an entire plan or system.

After our joint analysis, Shaposhnikov employed the move 7...b5 in what was to become a famous game with Yuri Kotkov in the 1958 RSFSR Championship. In it a secondary variation occurred which, although interesting, did not, unfortunately, answer the main question: did the system have the right to exist?

However, at the time it was clear to me that one game alone would be unable to give a categorical reply, and that the most deep and thorough analysis was required. And I began examining the dozens of branches of the main continuation, preparing to adopt the 7...b5 variation seriously, and for a long time.

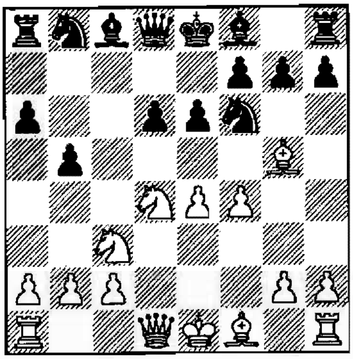
And the more I analysed, the greater the scope for reflection which opened before me. New possibilities were discovered for White, but I never failed to be astonished by

Black's defensive and counter-attacking resources. Month followed month, the individual replies and tactical blows united into a system of various plans, and the commonly-occurring manoeuvres and strategy for Black in this variation became apparent. And when its original name of the 'Kuybishev Variation' gradually changed in chess literature to the 'Polugayevsky Variation', I decided at heart – and I trust I will not be considered immodest – that this was justified. Because every day for roughly six months(!) I spent hours at the board studying positions from the variation, and even went to sleep and dreamed about it. Finally, because the analysis recorded in my notebooks was so scrupulous and at the same time fantastic, some of it has not in fact occurred in practice during the nearly four decades of the variation's existence. To put it picturesquely, for a certain time the variation became my *alter ego*.

Incidentally, later I once thought to myself: why was it, after all, that I made a detailed study of this particular opening scheme, and not some other? And I realised that in my youth I had been attracted by an exceptionally tactical struggle, with a swift clash of pieces from the very first moves, and immediate complications. The 7...b5 variation fully answered all of this, as well as one further demand that was important at the time for the author. I was most unhappy, and to a certain extent annoyed, that in the Ruy Lopez, which was initially my favourite, the opponent could, without thinking, make some 17-20 'correct', 'book' moves, without the risk of making the slightest significant mistake.

In the Sicilian, on the other hand, the value of each move was greatly enhanced, and in the 7...b5 variation it became positively 'worth its weight in gold': after all, at times a single inaccuracy after the seventh(!) move could lead to disaster for either side. In the resulting complications, both players had to work assiduously at the board, and this corresponded in the best way possible to the stamp of my character. In other words, the 'virgin soil' of the variation, and the complete novelty of the searching, made research work on the 7...b5 variation highly attractive.

Such is the pre-history of the variation.

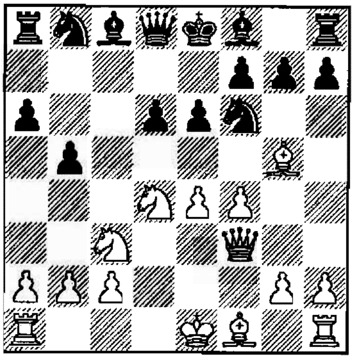


On setting up this position on the board, in the first instance I began, of course, to analyse the continuations after 8 e5; my 'Sicilian' experience told me that, if a refutation of Black's 7th move existed, it would be found in the main line of the system. It was only after 'polishing up' this main continuation that I turned to an analysis of those positions where White declines his opponent's challenge, and continues with normal moves. And I satisfied myself that in each such instance Black's early ...b7-b5 is fully justified. Black succeeds in developing his queenside, and is the first to begin active play against White's queenside, which is where the opposing king normally takes shelter.

From the diagram position, the moves (apart from 8 e5) that have occurred in practice are 8 ♕f3, 8 a3, 8 ♗d3 and 8 ♗e2. It is in this order that we will consider them.

AN OPTIMISTIC BEGINNING

8 ♕f3



This is what my opponents played in the first games in which the 'Polugayevsky Variation' occurred. This 'normal' move does not set Black any particular problems.

The game **Nikitin-Polugayevsky** (26th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959) continued as follows:

8...♗b7 9 a3

If White plans to follow the familiar path (♗d3, 0-0-0 etc.), he cannot manage without this move, since Black's plan includes increasing the pressure on e4. It should in general be pointed out, that, in comparison with the usual position of the Rauzer Attack, Black has made a significant gain: he has not wasted time on ...♕c7, and can, in reply to 9 0-0-0 for instance, for the moment play 9...♘bd7 (the immediate 9...b4 is dubious in view of the conventional 10 ♘d5! exd5 11 e5 h6 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 e6 fxe6 14 ♘xe6 ♕b6 15 ♗d3, and White's attack develops unchecked, Rogalevich-Kaleta, corr. 1975), threatening 10...b4, while on 10 a3 there follows 10...♖c8, with the unequivocal desire, under suitable conditions, of sacrificing the exchange on c3, or of exploiting the weakening of White's queenside in some other way. The black queen, meanwhile, can take up position at a5 or b6, according to choice. This, incidentally, is roughly the course taken by a game of mine against Spassky, which will be described later.

If after 9 0-0-0 ♘bd7 White chooses 10 ♗d3 (hoping after 10...b4 to again sacrifice his knight with 11 ♘d5), then Black, by continuing 10...♗e7 11 ♖he1 ♕b6 12 ♕e3 h6 13 ♗h4 g5! 14 fxg5 ♘g4 15 ♕f4 ♘ge5 acquires a splendid outpost in the centre and gains excellent counterplay.

9...♘bd7 10 f5

In practice White proves unable to exploit the weakening of the d5 square, and therefore he should nevertheless have continued 10 0-0-0.

10...e5 11 ♘b3 ♗e7 12 0-0-0 ♖c8!

A move which in this set-up is absolutely essential. Black utilises the fact that his queen (which normally stands at c7) does not prevent his rook from taking an active part in the battle for the centre, for the square e4; the sacrifice on c3 is threatened!

13 ♗d3 0-0

Already Black could have carried out the intended counter-blow: 13...♖xc3 14 bxc3 d5, with perfectly adequate compensation for the exchange, but he decided to delay it for one move, continuing to build up threats by bringing his king's rook into action.

14 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 15 ♘d5

White clarifies the situation, at the same time disclosing his plan: after the exchange on d5 he intends to seize the e4 square, and after taking control of it to mount a kingside pawn storm. But Black's counterplay against White's queenside, which has been weakened by the advance a2-a3, is so real that White never gets his hands on the e4 square...

15...♗xd5! 16 exd5 ♕c7!

Combining threats against the pawn at d5 (after the possible 17 ♘d2 ♕b7), and, indirectly, the e4 square, since the c2 pawn is put under fire. Black's plans also include the positional pawn sacrifice 17...e4, with the follow-up 18 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♖fe8, when both threats, ...♗f6, and ...♗g5+ followed by ...♖e3, are highly unpleasant. The attempt to blockade the e-pawn by 17 ♗e4 allows Black to seize the initiative completely by 17...a5. One is forced to the conclusion that already Black's position is the more promising.

17 ♔b1

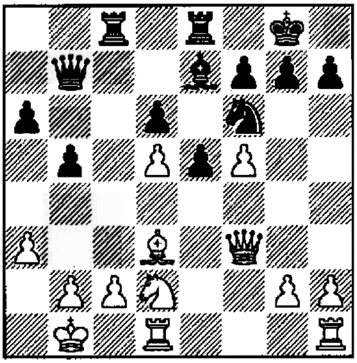
In my opinion, White should nevertheless have stuck to his guns, and played 17 ♘d2, with the probable follow-up 17...e4 18 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗f6. White's extra pawn is of no significance, the black bishop is much more active than its white opponent, and the opening of further lines on the queenside is threatened, but at the same time White's position is by no means lacking in counter-chances, associated in particular with play against the black king: g2-g4, h2-h4, ♖hg1 etc.

After the move in the game, which is something of a waste of time, the initiative passes completely to Black.

17...♖fe8!

An important link in the implementation of the above-mentioned plan.

18 ♘d2 ♕b7



Once again Black could have made the break ...e4, but the move played is also good. On the one hand it threatens the pawn at d5, and at the same time it exploits the departure of the white knight from the queenside, allowing the advance of the black pawns.

19 ♘e4 b4

Not, of course, 19...♘xd5 20 f6!, when the roles are reversed: now it is White who has a deadly attack. Incidentally, in reply to 19 ♗e4 Black would again have played 19...b4, with the possible continuation 20 a4 ♕d7. If now 21 g4, then 21...♕xa4 22 b3 ♕a3, and on 23 ♘c4 – 23...♖xc4 24 bxc4 ♘xe4 25 ♕xe4 b3, with a decisive attack on the king, while 21 b3 is highly unpleasantly met by 21...♖c3 22 ♕e2 ♖ec8 23 ♖c1 ♕a7, and if 24 ♖he1, either 24...♕d4, or even 24...♘d7 25 ♘f3 (otherwise ...♗g5) 25...♘c5. Even so, it was this continuation that White should have chosen, since as the game went he was unable to organise a defence.

20 a4

After 20 axb4 ♕xb4 the lone white king is beyond saving.

20...b3 21 c3 ♕d7

Black has achieved his aim. His threats are much more concrete than White's purely nominal possession of his e4 square, which is dangerous only in combination with a kingside pawn storm.

22 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♕e4

White openly goes onto the defensive, but his position on the queenside is too badly compromised.

23...♖c5

The direct threat of ...♖a5 is extremely unpleasant, and on 24 ♗xa6 White gets mated: 24...♖a8 25 ♗b5 ♖xb5 26 axb5 ♖a1+ 27 ♔xa1 ♕a7+ 28 ♔b1 ♗g5 and ...♕a2 mate.

24 ♕b4 ♕a7!

The exclamation mark is deserved not so much by the move, as by the black queen itself, which in this game displays amazing mobility. Now 25...♖b8 is threatened, and if

26 ♕e4 – once again 26...♕d7, renewing the attack on the pawn at a4. White cannot capture the 'thorn in his flesh' – the pawn at b3: 25 ♕xb3 ♖b8 26 ♕a3 e4, followed by the capture on c3.

25 ♕e4 ♖a5 26 ♕b4 ♕c7

The 'dance of the queens' has clearly been won by Black, and White gives in. However, in view of the threat of 27...♖b8, he has nothing better.

27 ♕xb3 ♖b8 28 ♕c4

On 28 ♕c2 Black would have carried out the thematic 28...e4, including his bishop in the attack. He now rejects 28...♖c5 followed by capturing on c3, in favour of something simpler.

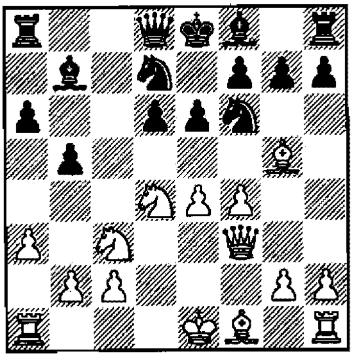
28...♕b7 29 ♕b4

On 29 b4, 29...e4 again decides, since the key c3 point falls. After the move in the game Black does not avoid the exchange of queens, since his rooks continue the attack.

29...♕xb4 30 cxb4 ♖xb4 31 ♗c2 e4 32 ♔c1 ♖c5, and under the threat of great loss of material, **White resigned**.

The course of this game convinced me of the promising nature of Black's position after 8 ♕f3, and when two months later, in a tournament at Marianske-Lazne, the Czech master **J. Fabian** employed it against me, I was secretly delighted.

The divergence from the previous game began in the following position.



Here, instead of 10 f5, White played

10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 f5 e5 12 ♘de2

thus neutralising the possible sacrifice on c3. But, in my opinion, Black's very next move refutes White's plan.

12...♕c7!

The threat of capturing on e4 forces White to make an awkward defence of his c2 square.

13 ♖d2 ♗e7

Renewing the attack on e4. White plays an extravagant move, but even after the more natural 14 ♗xf6 his prospects would have been poor.

14 h4 ♕a5! 15 ♘g3

Here there were two paths leading to a great advantage for Black: either 15...b4 16 axb4 ♕xb4, when the threat of ...♖b8 and ...♘c5 renders White's position extremely difficult, or else the simple 15...h6, when White is faced with the dilemma of capturing on f6 or retreating with 16 ♗e3, when both 16...d5 and 16...♖xc3 are good.

But for some reason Black chose a third path...

15...0-0

An unnecessary delay. Even without this Black was mobilised well enough to begin active play.

16 ♘d5 ♘xd5?

A mistake, which is even more surprising, in that I had by no means forgotten the above game against Nikitin. In this type of structure, where White is unable to exploit the weakness of the c6 square, it is essential to capture on d5 with the bishop, since the knight at f6 is needed by Black to control the centre. I am unable to give any sort of convincing explanation for such a strange decision – clearly it is a matter for chess psychologists. What is clear is that my defeat in this game did not blemish in any way the reputation of the opening set-up: after 16...♗xd5 17 exd5 b4 Black would have retained the initiative.

17 exd5 f6 18 ♗e3 b4 19 ♗f2

Perhaps it was this move that Black overlooked in his preliminary calculations. The pawn at a3 is now covered by the white queen, and his knight is defended. Nevertheless, for the moment Black has nothing to fear...

19...♘c5 20 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 21 ♘e4

Frequently a mistake is not ruinous in itself, but due to the fact that a second follows in its path.

Here Black should have continued 21...♖fc8 22 ♘xc5 ♖xc5, when he has some compensation for the exchange. After ...♔f8 the pawn at d5 will be weak, but a concrete appraisal of the position depends on the continuation 23 ♕b3 bxa3 24 ♕xa3 ♕b6, with the threat of 25...♖a5.

If Black does not wish to sacrifice the exchange, he should simply retreat with 21...♖c7, preparing ...♖b8. The move played is undoubtedly a mistake, since Black removes the tension on the crucial section of the board, and goes into an ending which is fairly unpleasant for him.

21...bxa3? 22 ♕xa3 ♕xa3 23 bxa3 ♖a5 24 ♔b2 ♖b8 25 ♔a2 ♗c8?

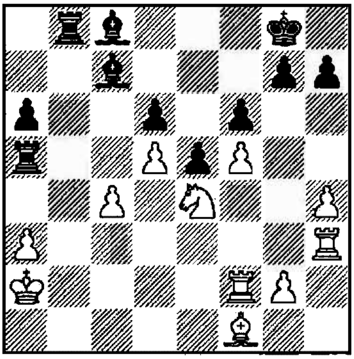
Yet another mistake. Correct was the immediate undermining of the white centre by 25...g6, and if 26 g4 h5! (26...gxf5 27 gxf5 ♗c8 is weaker in view of 28 ♖f2 ♖b4 29 c4), with complications of the type 27 ♖g1 hxg4 28 ♖xg4, when the quiet move 28...♗c8! gives Black fair counterplay: 29 ♖xg6+ ♔f7, and if 30 ♗h3, then the preparatory 30...♖b4 is possible.

After failing to utilise this opportunity, Black ends up in what is evidently a lost position. The difference between the knight at e4 and the bishop at e7 is just too great!

26 ♖f2 ♗d8 27 ♖h3 ♗c7

If Black plays 27...♗b6, 28 ♖b3 is very unpleasant.

28 c4!



White is not now distracted by the possibility of 28 ♖b3, and instead shuts the black rook at a5 out of the game.

28...♗d7 29 g4

White's plan takes shape: utilising his advantage in force on the kingside, he begins a pawn storm there.

29...♗a4

With the hope of somehow bringing this bishop into play via d1. In reply White sensibly exchanges off Black's only reasonably-placed piece.

30 ♖b2 ♖xb2+ 31 ♔xb2 ♔f8 32 g5 ♗d7 33 ♖f3 ♔e7 34 gxf6+ gxf6 35 ♗h3

The remainder is obvious: White is practically playing with an extra rook.

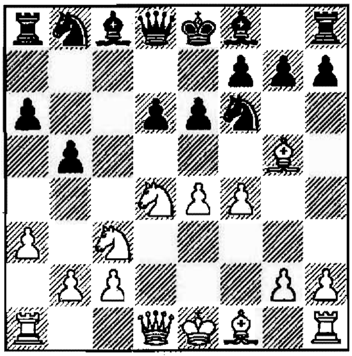
There followed **35...♖a4 36 ♔b3 ♖a5 37 h5 ♗a4+ 38 ♔b2**, and Black soon admitted defeat, having once again trusted in the viability of the 'Polugayevsky Variation'.

Incidentally, from now on, for the sake of brevity, I shall take the liberty of calling it simply The Variation, using capital letters to distinguish the 7...b5 system from the countless number of chess variations.

ALMOST AT A RUN

8 a3

On a number of counts this cannot pretend to be a refutation of The Variation.



Firstly, to the active 'Sicilian' move ...b7-b5, White replies with a passive move. Secondly, it becomes dangerous for White to castle on the queenside, since then the planned advance ...b5-b4 gains in strength. Thirdly, if he is so inclined, Black can transpose into the normal variation with ...♕c7, where the inclusion of the moves ...b7-b5 and a2-a3 is not in White's favour. Incidentally, Black is by no means obliged to develop his queen at c7, but can post it more actively at b6.

The several games played on this theme would merely appear to confirm this abstract assessment of the move 8 a3. In the game Lehmann-Tatai (Las Palmas 1972; it is amazing that even ten years later the move 8 a3 still had its adherents!), Black played very exactly, in the first instance preventing the e4-e5 advance: 8...♘bd7 9 ♕f3 ♗b7 10 ♗d3 ♕b6! 11 ♘de2 ♖c8, and on the opening stage we can already ring down the curtain. It is White, rather than Black as is usual, who has problems over finding a safe spot for his king: in order to provide a shelter for it on the kingside, he had to go in for the unwieldy manoeuvre 12 ♗h4 ♗e7 13 ♗f2 ♕c7, when Black had the more promising game.

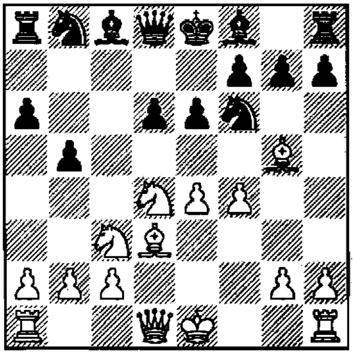
The play is sharper if Black ignores the threat of e4-e5, and plays 8...♗b7 immediately. In a game against me in 1959, Levin embarked on an impulsive attack: **9 e5 dxe5** 10 fxe5 ♕c7 11 exf6 ♕e5+ 12 ♕e2 ♕xg5.

Tempted by the fact that Black's bishop had been diverted from the defence of e6, White now sacrificed a piece: 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 15 ♖d1+ ♔c7 16 ♗xb5 ♕xf6 (it was probably feasible to 'take what was being offered' – 16...axb5, when to continue his attack, White has to go in for further sacrifices such as 17 ♖d5 ♗xd5 18 ♘xd5+ ♔d8, and the maximum he can hope for is perpetual check) 17 ♕c4+ ♔b6 18 ♕b3 axb5 19 ♕xb5+ ♔a7 20 ♕a5+ ♘a6 21 ♘b5+ ♔b8 22 ♖d8+ ♗c8 23 ♘d6 ♔a7, and after wandering through the checks the black king feels quite safe, since on 24 ♘xc8+ ♖xc8 25 ♖xc8 there follows 25...♕e6+, and meanwhile White has simply no way of strengthening his attack.

If White keeps the e4-e5 break in reserve, and attempts, as Spassky did against Tatarintsev (Kislovodsk 1960) to increase the pressure by 9 ♕e2, here too after 9...♗e7 10 0-0-0 ♘bd7 11 g4 ♖c8 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 ♕e1 ♕b6 (13...♘c5 looks even better, reserving the possibility of this queen manoeuvre) 14 h4 ♘c5 Black has counterplay.

ONE AND A HALF POINTS OUT OF TWO

8 ♗d3



A more solid continuation. I would not venture to state categorically who first adopted it, but it was with the game **Spassky-Polugayevsky**, played in the very first round of the 27th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1960, that the active life of this entire system for White first began.

Spassky made this move after some deliberation, and to this day I do not know whether he had planned this beforehand, and was merely accustoming himself during this time to the nature of the coming battle, or whether he decided on this piece set-up there and then at the board.

There was no doubt that I, on the other hand, was playing at sight, so to speak. My analysis of the main continuation 8 e5 had taken too much time and effort, and having decided that The Variation would not be refuted by other moves, I studied them only when life required this.

The first thought flashed instantly through my mind: White can hardly castle short on account of the undefended state of his knight at d4. He was evidently planning to castle long, but did not wish to block in his bishop at f1, by immediately placing his queen at e2 and making ready for the break with e4-e5. If this was the case, I had to delay ...♗b7, and in the first instance prepare for this possible blow in the centre. Besides, White's e4 was already securely defended...

And I replied **8...♘bd7**.

There followed the immediate – and for me unexpected – **9 f5**. Normally this attempt to seize control of d5 does not bring White any benefit, and the absence of the white bishop from the a2-g8 diagonal does nothing to strengthen the pressure of the white pieces on this key square. But even so, Spassky's attempt deserves respect, if only for the reason that he instantly found a way of exploiting a completely concrete feature of the position for an original manoeuvre. After **9...e5** he made the original advance **10 ♘c6**, so as to attempt to gain a firm hold on d5, via b4. It has to be said that neither before this game, nor since it, have I encountered a similar manoeuvre by White in the Sicilian Defence.

Nevertheless, White wastes a considerable amount of time, and gives the opponent counterplay!

10...♕b6 11 ♘b4 ♗b7

Suddenly a slight, and again perfectly specific defect of the bishop's position at d3 is revealed. If in this position it were at e2, the occupation of d5 (after the preliminary ♗xf6) would assure White of a slight but fairly persistent positional advantage. But here he chooses the plan with queenside castling. Play on opposite flanks begins, and everything depends upon who is the quicker.

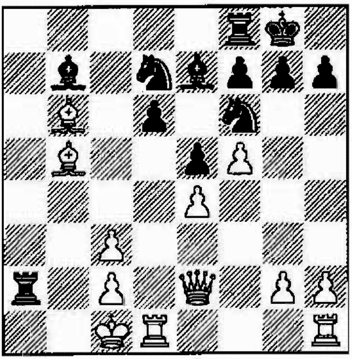
12 ♕e2 ♗e7 13 0-0-0

All is ready for the standard advance of the g-pawn, and if Black should give in to the natural desire to take his king into safety as quickly as possible by 13...0-0, he immediately loses first the battle for the d5 square (14 g4!, followed by ♗xf6, g4-g5 and ♘d5), and then also the game.

I should like to mention here that, in positions from the Sicilian Defence, move order is normally of decisive importance. In the Ruy Lopez, for instance, you can sometimes permit yourself to transpose, to 'confuse' one move with another in the execution of an intended plan, or even reject one plan in favour of another. Sicilian players, in contrast, are forced to judge the value of a move literally on its weight in gold – or the weight of a point in the tournament table?! – since in this opening, more than anywhere else, a transposition can radically alter the assessment of a position and the character of the struggle.

And so here, being governed not so much by a general assessment, as by specific calculation, Black replied **13...♖c8!**

Although in general this is a standard Sicilian move, it deserves an exclamation mark, for the reason that Black had another perfectly playable continuation – 13...a5. White must reply 14 ♗e3, when Black can choose between the less active 14...♕d8 15 ♘bd5 ♗xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 17 exd5 b4, and the sharp, but very promising sacrifice of his queen for only two minor pieces: 14...axb4 15 ♗xb6 bxc3 16 ♗xb5 ♖xa2 17 bxc3 0-0.



I saw this sacrifice, and if there had not been anything better, I would have gone in for it. But in the first place, the move 13...♖c8 was nevertheless more soundly based, and secondly – and I hope I will be understood correctly – I did not wish to begin an event which was so important for me, then still a master striving for the grandmaster title, with such sharp and, in many respects, risky play.

14 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 15 g4

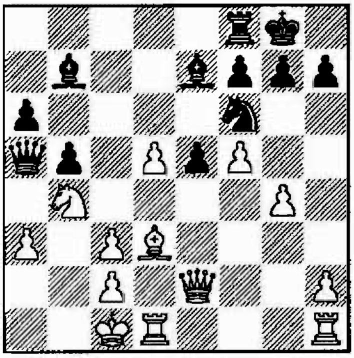
If Spassky had sensed in time the danger threatening White, he would nevertheless have played 15 ♘bd5, reconciling himself to the thought that White has not a trace of an opening advantage, since after 15...♗xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 17 exd5 h5! the advance of his kingside pawns is halted, while Black's plan of ...♗f6, ...♔e7, ...♖c5, ...b5-b4, and ...a6-a5-a4-a3, gaining the c3 square for his pieces, can be carried out without hindrance.

Instead, this 'active' move in the game unexpectedly leads White to the verge of the abyss.

15...♕a5 16 a3 (there is no longer anything else) **16...♖xc3 17 bxc3 d5!**

This, rather than the straightforward check 17...♕xa3+, which is bad on account of 18 ♔d2 d5 19 ♖a1, and if 19...dxe4 20 ♗xb5+, winning. Now, on the other hand, two more black pieces are included in the attack – the two bishops.

18 exd5 0-0!



It may sound a rather delicate assertion, but up to a certain point Black conducts the attack in exemplary fashion, adhering completely to the principles of The Variation, and of the Sicilian Defence in general: be prepared to give up material for active play! In the resulting position it is very difficult for White to find a defence.

Apart from 19...♕xa3+ followed by 20...♗xb4, Black also threatens 19...♘xd5, which could follow, for example, on 19 ♔b2. The threat of 20...♘xc3 is then highly unpleasant, and White is forced to play for a counter-attack: 20 f6! ♘xf6 (not 20...♗xf6 21 ♕e4, or 20...♘xc3 21 fxe7 ♘xe2 22 exf8=♕+ ♔xf8 23 ♗xe2, with a material advantage for White) 21 g5 e4 22 gxf6 ♗xf6 23 ♗xe4 ♗xc3+ 24 ♔a2 ♗xb4, or 22 ♖he1 ♖c8! 23 gxf6 ♗xf6 24 ♗xe4 (bad is 24 ♘a2 ♖xc3 25 ♔b1 ♖xa3 26 ♗xe4

♖xa2 27 ♗xh7+ ♔h8!, and the game is decided) 24...♖xc3 25 ♗xh7+ ♔h8.

Spassky evidently decides that there is no way of defending the white king at b2, and chooses a different plan. He brings his queen to the defence of his c3 pawn, simultaneously attacking the bishop at e7, thereby delaying the opponent's attack.

19 ♕xe5 ♕xa3+ 20 ♔b1

The white king cannot go to d2: 20...♗xb4 21 cxb4 ♕xb4+ 22 c3 ♕b2+ 23 ♗c2 ♖d8, and White has no defence. But here, with Black's attack at its peak, I committed an inaccuracy, which allowed White to save the game in surprising fashion.

20...♗xb4

Black could not, of course, act according to the principle 'the threat is stronger than its execution', and play 20...♖e8, on account of 21 d6 ♗f8 22 ♕xe8! and 23 d7, but he could have set his opponent more difficult problems than in the game by 20...♗c5! White would have had to parry both 21...♖e8, and 21...♘xg4, as well as to take measures against the manoeuvre of the knight from f6 to a4 via d7 and b6.

21 cxb4 ♘xd5?

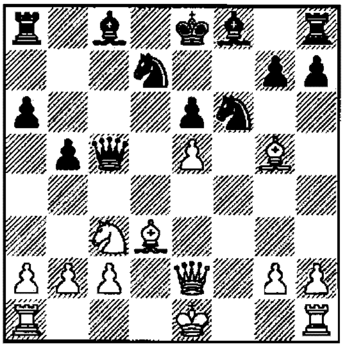
As often happens, one inaccuracy is followed by another. Black could, and should, have tried for a win by 21...♕xb4+ 22 ♕b2 ♕c5. At the board I didn't like this, on account of 23 c4 (White has simply no other move, since 23...♘xd5 followed by 24...♘c3+ is threatened), but later it was discovered that Black can then play 23...bxc4! 24 ♕xb7 ♕d6!!, when White has to give up his queen, since he loses after 25 ♔a2 ♖b8 26 ♕c6 ♕b4. But after 25 ♗xc4 ♖b8 26 ♕xb8+ ♕xb8+ the combination of black queen and knight – pieces that complement each other ideally in attack – is highly unpleasant for White. Possible, for instance, is 27 ♔a2 (or 27 ♔c2) 27...♕b4 28 ♗b3 ♘e4, when the white passed pawn is securely blockaded, and Black's opposite number will shortly begin to advance.

But in the game after **22 ♕b2 ♘c3+ 23 ♔c1** Black forced a **draw** by **23...♘a2+ 24 ♔b1 ♘c3+**, since the ending resulting after the exchange of queens and the capture of the rook at d1 is now favourable for White.

Nevertheless, this game did not deprive the move 8 ♗d3 of its supporters, although on the ninth move no one now played f4-f5. Earlier than anyone else, the Kiev master **Yuri Sakharov** made an attempt to vindicate 8 ♗d3. Roughly three weeks later, in the 15th round of that same USSR Championship, after 8 ♗d3 ♘bd7 he chose against me **9 ♕e2**.

Of course, during the tournament there was no time for the analysis of secondary variations – and that is how I regarded the continuation 8 ♗d3 – but after a couple of minutes' consideration, I decided that I should immediately 'dislodge' the now undefended knight at d4 from its centralised position. Black played **9...♕b6**.

The reply **10 ♘xe6** came so quickly that it was obvious that on this occasion I was up against a prepared variation, possibly even by a whole group of Ukrainian players who were participating in the Championship. My vigilance was trebled, but it did not prove so difficult to refute the preparation: after **10...fxe6 11 e5 dxe5 12 fxe5** I had to find only one move – **12...♕c5!**



for it to become clear that White's attack did not compensate for the sacrificed knight.

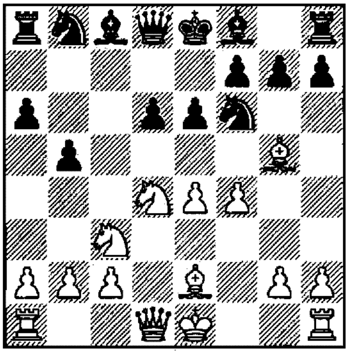
Sakharov spent a mass of time in thought, and it was obvious that his fellow-analysers felt highly uncomfortable, since White is unable to regain his piece.

There followed **13 ♗f4 ♘d5 14 ♘xd5** (White cannot play either 14 ♘e4 ♘xf4, or 14 ♕h5+ g6, when the black king safely crosses over to the queenside) **14...exd5 15 0-0-0** (if 15 ♕h5+ g6 16 ♗xg6+, then 16...hxg6 17 ♕xh8 ♕b4+! 18 ♗d2 ♕e4+, and Black dominates the position) **15...♕c6!** (in this way Black simultaneously achieves three aims: he vacates the c5 square for his knight, and controls both e6, and, most important, g6) **16 ♗f5 ♗e7 17 ♕g4 g6 18 e6 ♘c5**, and in desperation White sacrificed a second piece, **19 ♗xg6+ hxg6 20 ♕xg6+ ♔d8**, but after **21 ♖he1 ♗xe6 22 b4 ♔d7! 23 bxc5 ♖ag8 24 ♕d3 ♖xg2 25 ♕f3 ♖g6** he **resigned**.

It is possible that White's play in this game could at some point have been improved, but even so a piece is a piece, and in subsequent games supporters of such an expensive attack were not to be found. And when in a game Tolush-Hottes from the USSR-West Germany match (Hamburg 1960), White attempted to manage without the sacrifice, and in reply to 8 ♗d3 ♘bd7 9 ♕e2 ♕b6 retreated with 10 ♘f3, there followed 10...♗b7 11 ♗h4 (with the already familiar idea of allowing kingside castling after ♗f2) 11...b4 (the quiet 11...♗e7 is also perfectly possible) 12 ♘b1 d5 13 e5 ♘e4, and White was forced onto the defensive. The fact that he subsequently won was by no means on account of his successful handling of the opening.

A YEAR-LONG DUEL

In the series of games mentioned above, which enabled the truth regarding The Variation to be approached, my theoretical duel with **Alexei Suetin** holds a rather special position. It began with the move **8 ♗e2**, and caused me many anxious moments, before I was able to see my way through the resulting problems.



It has to be said that this move, for all its apparent modesty and lack of pretension, is full of venom. White intends to transfer his bishop to f3, and to make the e4-e5 break under the most favourable conditions. Just how dangerous a plan this is was first demonstrated in the game Bhend-Walther (Zurich 1959), where Black continued 8... ♗b7 9 ♗f3 (9 e5!? is also dangerous; Black should play 9...b4, since he loses after 9... dxe5 10 fxe5 ♗c5 11 ♘b3!) 9...♘bd7 10 e5 ♗xf3 11 ♘xf3 dxe5 12 fxe5 h6 13 ♗e3 (13 ♗h4 is more accurate, provoking a further weakening of Black's kingside, e.g. 13...g5 14 ♗f2 ♘g4 15 ♗d4 ♗g7 16 ♕e2 ♕c7 17 0-0-0 ♘gxe5 18 ♖he1, with a highly formidable attacking position) 13...♘g4 14 ♗d4 ♕c7 15 0-0 ♘dxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5, and instead of the erroneous 17 ♔h1, after 17 ♖e1 ♗d6 (if 17...♗c5, then 18 ♔h1 ♖d8 19 ♗xe5) 18 ♕h5 ♗c5 19 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 20 ♔h1 White could have won the e6 pawn.

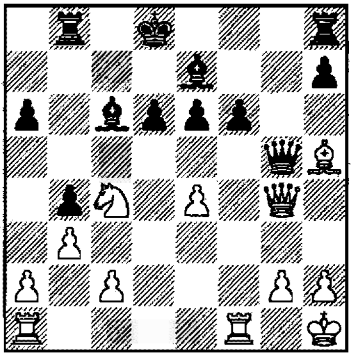
However, by the time of the USSR Spartakiad that same year, 1959, in Moscow, where Suetin first played the quiet 8 ♗e2 against me, I was not yet acquainted with the above game, and even now I do not especially blame myself for this. There was less than two months between the finish of the Zurich tournament and the start of the Spartakiad, we then had no efficient publication such as *64*, and information, especially from abroad, was received with considerable delay.

Later it was once again confirmed that Black should not develop his bishop at b7 too early, since this move hinders his best piece set-up on the queenside. In the game Kalinkin-Gusakov (RSFSR Zonal Championship 1960) 8...♗b7 9 ♗f3 ♕b6 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘fd7 12 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 13 ♕e2 ♗b4 14 0-0-0 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 0-0 16 ♖d3 ♕d5 17 ♘f5 ♕xe5 18 ♘e7+ ♔h8 19 ♕h5 ♘f6 20 ♕h4 ♘bd7 21 ♖f1 led to a strong attack for White, which ended in complete success: 21...h6 22 ♗xh6 gxh6 23 ♕xh6+ ♘h7 24 ♖xd7, and Black could find nothing better than to go into an ending, 24...♕g5+, which he was unable to save.

But this happened later. At that time, in the Spartakiad, I avoided the set-up with ...♗b7 intuitively, rather than as a result of specific calculation. I realised that the exchange of bishops, inevitable after ♗f3 and e4-e5, was in White's favour, and that Black again had to seek counterplay in queenside activity, i.e. in the spirit of the main idea of The Variation.

The correct idea, **8...b4**, was thus conceived, but after **9 ♘a4** I could find nothing better during the game than to try to exploit immediately the position of the white knight on the edge of the board by **9...♕a5**. There followed **10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 b3 ♗d7 12 0-0 ♘c6** (the more consistent 12...♗xa4 13 bxa4 is interesting, and now not 13...♕xa4 14 f5!, with an attack for White, but that which occurred in the game Timofeev-Shaposhnikov, Ulyanovsk 1960: 13...♕c5! 14 ♔h1 ♗e7 15 ♗g4 ♘c6 16 ♘b3 ♕e3 17 f5 h5! 18 ♗f3 ♖c8 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 ♗xh5+ ♔d7 21 ♗g4 ♘e5, which gave Black sufficient compensation for the pawn; however White, who has the more promising position, is by no means obliged to copy blindly and completely this order of moves; for example, he could have played 15 f5, maintaining the pressure) **13 ♔h1 ♗e7 14 f5! ♕e5 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 ♗h5+ ♔d8 17 ♘xc6+ ♗xc6 18 ♘b6 ♖b8 19 ♘c4**. Here Black, despite the fact that he has two bishops, stands worse, since his king will remain a cause for constant concern, while his pawn phalanx in the centre is weak.

This began to tell very quickly: **19...♕c5 20 ♕g4! ♕g5**.



21 ♕xe6!

White embarks on a long and correct combination, planning to sacrifice a rook. After the exchange of queens, 21 ♕xg5 fxg5 22 ♖ad1, the drawbacks to Black's position would threaten to become advantages, while the purely concrete threat to the d6 pawn could be parried by 22...♗b5.

21...♕xh5 22 ♖ad1

White plays very accurately. In the variation 22 ♘xd6 ♗d7 23 ♘f7+ ♔e8 24 ♘d6+ ♔d8 Black has a draw.

22...♗d7 23 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 24 ♕xd6

After 24 ♕xf6+ ♗e7! 25 ♕xh8+ ♔c7 Black repels the attack while maintaining a material advantage, but what is he to play now? The rook at b8 is attacked, and 25

♕xf6+ is also threatened. The natural 24...♕b5 is met by the unexpected 25 ♖f5, when Black loses by force. He therefore has to reconcile himself to a 'wandering king'.

24...♔c8 25 ♕xa6+ ♔c7 26 ♕d6+ ♔c8 27 ♖d1

If White had been tempted to establish material equality by 27 ♘b6+, Black's pieces would have come to life. The move played is much stronger. White now threatens 28 ♖d5! followed by 29 ♖c5+.

27...♖b7!

The only move that allows Black to put up any resistance. He attempts to somehow establish co-ordination between his pieces, and to allow his king to move to d8.

28 ♖d5 ♕h4 29 h3

Alas, White's position is so strong that even this enforced loss of time for prophylaxis does not ease Black's lot.

29...♖g8 30 ♖c5+ ♔d8 31 ♖a5 ♕e1+ 32 ♔h2 ♖xg2+

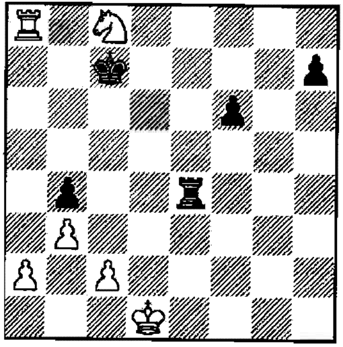
I could see no other defence, since after 32...♔e8 33 ♖a8+ ♔f7 34 ♖xg8 ♔xg8 35 ♕d5+ White regains his sacrificed material with considerable interest.

33 ♔xg2 ♕e2+ 34 ♔g3 ♕e1+ 35 ♔f3 ♕f1+ 36 ♔e3 ♕e1+ 37 ♔d3 ♕f1+ 38 ♔d2 ♕f2+ 39 ♔d3 ♕f1+ 40 ♔d2 ♕f2+ 41 ♔c1 ♕e1+ 42 ♔b2 ♕c3+ 43 ♔c1 ♕e1+ 44 ♕d1 ♕xd1+ 45 ♔xd1 ♗xh3

In the resulting ending White has every chance of winning, since, apart from having an extra pawn, his rook and knight are excellently placed. The simplest now was 46 ♔e2, but my opponent was tempted by a forcing variation, and exchanged his excellent knight for the black bishop.

46 ♘e3? ♖e7 47 ♖a8+ ♗c8 48 ♘d5 ♖xe4 49 ♘b6 ♔c7 50 ♘xc8

It was this position that White was aiming for, reckoning that after 50...♖d4+ 51 ♔e2 ♔b7 52 ♖a7+ ♔xc8 53 ♖xh7 he has an easily-won rook ending, since the black king is cut off from its pawns. But this variation is by no means obligatory for Black.



50...h5!

For a short time White remains a piece ahead, but it becomes difficult for him to realise his material advantage.

51 ♘a7

51 ♖a5! was probably stronger, with winning chances after 51...♔xc8 52 ♖xh5, while if 51...h4, then 52 ♖c5+!, when White retains his material advantage.

51...♔b7 52 ♖h8 ♔xa7 53 ♖xh5 ♖f4!

Otherwise White on his next move plays 54 ♖f5.

54 a3 bxa3 55 ♖a5+ ♔b6 56 ♖xa3 ♖f2 57 ♖a8 f5 58 ♔c1?

A serious inaccuracy. 58 ♖d8 followed by ♖d2 was preferable.

58...f4 59 ♖c8 ♖g2 60 ♖f8 ♖f2 61 ♔b2

Only here did Black breathe a sigh of relief. Things would have been more difficult for him after 61 ♖f5!

61...♔c5 62 ♖f5+ ♔d4 63 ♖f8 f3 64 ♖d8+ ♔e3 65 ♔c3 ♖e2 66 b4 f2 67 ♖e8+ ♔f3 Drawn.

The impression left by my game with Suetin was a highly painful one, especially since shortly afterwards, in the 1960 RSFSR Championship Semi-Final, the then young candidate master Kalinkin literally crushed Georgy Ilivitsky, a highly experienced master of defence.

After 8 ♗e2 b4 9 ♘a4 ♕a5 he did not exchange on f6, but immediately played 10 b3, boldly sacrificing his central pawn. There followed 10...♘xe4 11 ♗f3 d5 12 ♗xe4 dxe4 13 ♕e2 ♗b7 14 0-0-0 ♘d7 15 f5 exf5 (15...e5 16 ♘e6) 16 ♖hf1 g6 17 g4 fxg4 18 ♕xg4 ♘e5 19 ♕f4 ♗g7 20 ♗f6 g5 21 ♗xg5 0-0 22 ♕f5 ♖ae8 23 ♗f6 ♗xf6 24 ♕xf6 ♕d8 25 ♕h6 ♘d3+ 26 ♖xd3, and Black resigned.

To be honest, at the time I did not examine this game too deeply. And therefore it came as a complete surprise when I received a letter, 19 years later(!), from a quite unknown player by the name of Buzykayev from the Siberian town of Kyzyl, where he rightly pointed out that, if instead of 18...♘e5 Ilivitsky had played 18...h5!, the picture would have changed sharply: 19 ♕h4 ♕xg5+! 20 ♕xg5 ♗h6, or 19 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 20 ♘c6+ (20 ♘e6+ ♔e8) 20...♔xc6 21 ♖f6+ ♔c7 22 ♗f4+ ♔c8 23 ♘b6+ ♕xb6.

True, changes can also be made in White's play. For example, 15 ♕g4 with the threat of 16 ♘xe6 comes into consideration, and only after 15...♗d5 – 16 f5 with a dangerous initiative.

However, at that time the one game with Suetin was quite sufficient for my far from cheerful state.

All this prompted me to think that an improvement for Black had to be sought at a very early stage of the game, somewhere between moves 8-10, and no later.

It goes without saying that 8 ♗e2 was studied literally under the microscope, but for a long time I was unable to find any plan that was at all acceptable.

I first of all noted that if Black doesn't play 8...b4, but contents himself with 8...♘bd7, then 9 ♗f3 ♗b7 10 e5 will give White the initiative: 10...♗xf3 11 ♘xf3 (11 ♕xf3 and 12 ♘c6 is also interesting) 11... dxe5 12 fxe5, as occurred (with an unimportant transposition of moves) in the Bhend-Walther game given above. Black's misfortune here is not just that he is forced to suffer, but that he suffers without any particular prospects for the future.

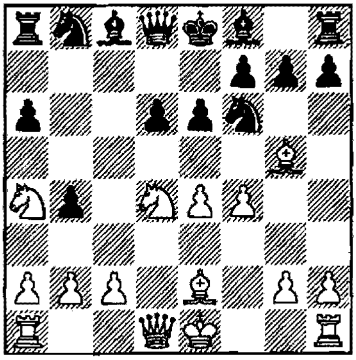
I attempted to include (after 8 ♗e2) the intermediate move 8...h6, and it appeared that after 9 ♗h4 b4 10 ♘a4 g5 Black could hope to go 'fishing in troubled waters': 11 fxg5 ♘xe4. But then I gave up this idea once and for all, since the elementary 9 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 10 0-0 affords White such a lead in development, that the attempt to neutralise it would be merely a pipe-dream.

Besides, the almost obligatory 10...♗e7 (so as to somehow at least safeguard the king) cuts off the queen from its 'lawful place' in the region of c7 to b6, and it must inevitably come under fire from the attacking white pieces. To clear my conscience, at the time I analysed roughly the following variation: 11 f5 ♕e5 12 fxe6 ♗xe6! 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♗h5+ ♔d7 15 ♕g4 ♘c6, and now neither 16 ♘d5, nor 16 ♖ad1 ♕c5+ 17 ♔h1 ♘e5, is particularly terrible for Black, but 16 ♖f7 looks very dangerous for him. Black cannot now play 16...♕c5+ 17 ♔h1 ♘e5, on account of 18 ♖xe7+, but I delved further into the maze, 16...♖af8 17 ♖xg7 ♖f4 18 ♕g3 ♖hf8 19 ♗f3 ♘d4 20 ♖f1 b4 21 ♘d1 ♖xf3, and Black wins.

Oh, if only this was obligatory for White! Alas, he can strike a blow on a different part of the board, weakened by the absence of the queen: 11 a4! b4 12 ♘a2 ♗b7 13 f5! e5 14 ♘b3 ♗xe4 15 ♘xb4, when White's advantage is undisputed. The move 8...h6 was therefore rejected, and I give it here now, merely as an illustration of the work that had to be done.

The attack on the knight with 8...b4 was, in the end, judged to be best, and from this starting point I began analysing further... I succeeded in establishing that after 8 ♗e2 b4 9 ♘a4 there was no necessity to despatch the queen to a5, which cuts it off too early from base. It was better to first complete the development of the kingside pieces, and in the event of White attacking the rook at a8 by ♗f3, to move it along the route a8-a7-c7. Then Black's bishop, exploiting the undefended state of the white knight, could occupy d7 with gain of tempo...

The idea was born. But it only took shape almost a year later, in my next game with **Suetin** in the 27th USSR Championship in Leningrad.



As a matter of principle, we both chose this same variation as in the 1959 Spartakiad, but I now played 'in the light of the latest achievements of science': **9...♗e7**, and on **10 ♗f3 – 10...♖a7.**

There is now no threat of e4-e5, and White cannot bring the knight at a4 into play by 11 c3: 11...♕a5 12 cxb4 ♕xb4+ 13 ♘c3 h6!, and if 14 ♗h4, then 14...♘xe4. All that remained for him was to follow the course studied by me.

11 0-0 ♗d7 12 b3 ♗xa4 13 bxa4 0-0

Black's development problems are now resolved. He plans ...♕b6, ...♘bd7, and the queenside pawn weaknesses may become an overall weakness for White.

A 'friendly' game Kalinkin-Sorokin (Krasnoyarsk 1960) was played 'on the theme' of 13...♕b6 (instead of 13...0-0), and after a swift and stormy clash it ended in a draw: 14 ♔h1 h6 15 ♗h4 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe6 ♘c3 17 ♕e1 ♗xh4 18 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 19 ♕xh4 ♔xg7 20 ♕g4+.

My game with Suetin continued **14 ♘b3 ♘bd7 15 ♕e2 ♕b6+ 16 ♔h1 ♖c7 17 ♖ad1**, and Black himself made an advance in the centre – **17...e5**, since White can now only dream about occupying d5.

Now White cannot merely sit and wait as the opponent's initiative on the c-file develops, and to counter it he himself prepares to double rooks on the adjacent file.

18 a5 ♕c6

Better, of course, is 18...♕b7, when the queen does not hinder Black's rooks in pressing – and breaking through! – on the file which is open and already controlled by him.

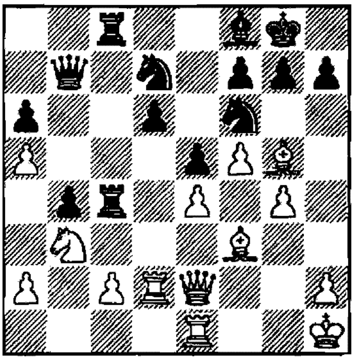
19 ♖d2 ♖fc8 20 ♖fd1 ♗f8 21 f5

Otherwise Black himself exchanges on f4, and then plays ...♘e5.

21...♕b7

Black has to waste a tempo, since otherwise he cannot strengthen his position.

22 ♖e1 ♖c4 23 g4



Here Black should have played the energetic 23...d5! 24 exd5 e4! 25 ♗g2 ♕c7, and if 26 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 27 g5, then 27...e3! 28 ♕xe3 ♘g4 29 ♕g3 ♗d6 30 ♖de2 ♖f8 31 ♕d3 ♗xh2, when he has numerous threats. White should evidently play 26 ♘d4, but even then 26...♘xd5 27 ♕xe4 ♘5f6 gives Black excellent chances, in view of the weakness of virtually all the white pawns. For example, 28 ♕f3 is unpleasantly met by 28...♘e5 29 ♕e2 ♖e8.

With his reply in the game, Black misses this favourable opportunity.

23...♕b5 24 ♕g2 ♕c6 25 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 26 g5 ♘e8 27 ♗d1 (if 27 ♖ee2, then 27...♘c7 28 g6 fxg6 29 fxg6 ♘e6 30 ♕h3 ♘g5, with an unclear position) **27...g6** (here also 27...♘c7 deserved consideration) **28 ♗g4 ♖c7 29 f6 ♖xc2 30 ♖xc2.**

A mistake. White should have advanced his h-pawn, when Black would be forced to reckon with the breakthrough 31 h5. But now the game transposes by force into an ending, where Black has nothing to fear: **30...♕xc2 31 ♕xc2 ♖xc2 32 ♖c1 ♖c3 33 ♗e2 ♘c7 34 ♗c4 h6 35 ♖xc3** (35 h4 deserved consideration, when 35...♖h3+ 36 ♔g1 ♖xh4 fails to 37 ♗f1, and if 37...♘e6 38 ♗xa6; after the move played the advantage is with Black) **35...bxc3 36 h4 hxg5 37 hxg5 d5 38 exd5 e4**, and with little time left on the clocks, a **draw** was agreed.

It goes without saying that Black could still have played for a win; e.g. 39 ♔g2 ♗d6 (39...c2 40 ♔f2 ♗a3 does not work – 41 ♔e2! c1=♕ 42 ♘xc1 ♗xc1 43 d6, and it is now White who wins) 40 ♘d4 ♗f4 41 ♘e2 c2 42 ♗b3 ♗xg5 43 d6 ♘e6 (if 43...♘b5, then 44 d7 ♗xf6 45 ♗xc2, and the e-pawn falls, after which White merely has to exchange the knights) 44 d7 ♗xf6 45 ♗xc2 ♘c5 46 ♘g3 ♘xd7 47 ♘xe4 ♗e7! 48 ♗d3 ♘b8, and White still has a lot to do to gain a draw. However, it probably can be attained by the manoeuvre 49 ♘c3 f5 50 ♘d5 ♗d6 51 a3! ♗xa3 52 ♘c7, and if 52...♗b4 53 ♘xa6 ♘xa6 54 ♗xa6 ♗xa5, since with opposite-colour bishops, f- and g-pawns do not win...

As a result of this opening 'slanging match' with Suetin, the truth about the move 8 ♗e2 was more or less established. As for myself, after moving yet again from a feeling of doubt to one of satisfaction, I got down to analysing the main continuation of The Variation.

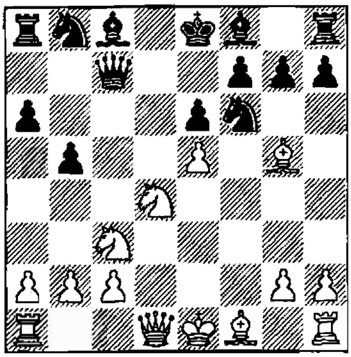
It is true that there is another move, which is not of independent significance, and which has hardly been tested in practice – 8 ♕e2, suggested by Iakov Murey. I did not analyse it seriously, since it can transpose into other, already familiar, variations. Black should merely avoid playing the opening carelessly, as was done by Korzin against Murey in a 1970 event: 8...♕c7 9 0-0-0 ♘c6??, and after 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 White's idea, based on the opposition of the white queen and black king, was fully realised: 11 ♘d5 exd5 12 ♘xc6, and Black can resign.

If 9...♘bd7 is played, a familiar position is reached, but no longer from The Variation: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♘bd7 8 ♕e2 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5. Here, as is well known, the sacrifice on d5 does not work: 10 ♘d5? exd5 11 exd5+ ♗e7 12 ♘c6 ♘b6. However, if such play is not to Black's taste, then in The Variation after 8 ♕e2 he can simply play 8...♗e7 9 0-0-0 b4!, when the early ...b7-b5 is utilised one hundred per cent.

IN THE MAIN DIRECTION

All these secondary branches were of considerable importance, but even so, they would have been of purely academic interest, had Black not been able to find sufficient defensive resources and counter-attacking chances in the main line of The Variation. In it White immediately casts doubts on the opponent's queenside activity, and strikes a blow in the centre, exploiting the pin on the knight at f6.

8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7



Apart from the direct 10 exf6 White also has several other continuations: 10 ♘f3, 10 ♛e2 and even 10 ♝xb5+?!, which occurred in my match with Tal in 1979, and which we will described later (cf. p.105). But back in the early part of 1958, when analysing the given position, I came to a firm conclusion: the modest knight retreat (as well as the passive 10 ♝f4) could not be regarded as one of White's aggressive plans.

After 10 ♘f3 Black has a choice between:

(a) the double-edged 10...b4 11 ♘b5 axb5 12 exf6 ♘d7 13 ♝xb5 ♜a5! 14 ♛e2 (unsatisfactory is 14 ♝xd7+ ♝xd7 15 0-0 ♜xg5 16 ♘xg5 ♛c5+, or 14 ♛d4 gxf6! 15 ♛xf6 ♜g8 16 ♘e5 ♜g7 17 ♝xd7+ ♝xd7 18 ♘xd7 ♜gxg5 19 ♘xf8 ♜ae5+) 14...gxf6 15 ♝xf6 ♜g8 16 ♘e5 ♜xb5! 17 ♛xb5 ♜xg2 18 ♜d1 ♝d6 19 ♘xd7 ♝xd7 20 ♛d3 ♝e7 21 ♝xe7 ♛e5+, and Black won in Kotkov-Shaposhnikov, USSR 1958, and

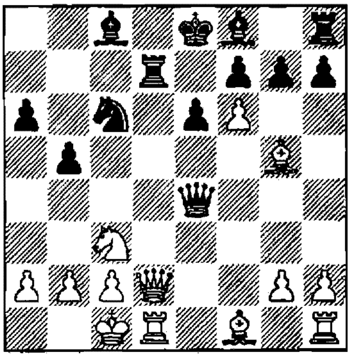
(b) the quiet 10...♘fd7 11 ♘e4 (11 ♛d2 is well answered by 11...♝b7 or 11...♝b4) 11...♝b7 12 ♘d6+ ♝xd6 13 exd6 ♛c5 14 ♛d4 f6 15 ♝e3 ♛xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♝d5, and the resulting ending is perfectly all right for Black, as was confirmed by the game Kuska-Hort, Czech Championship 1960.

Therefore at the time I began my main research with a study of the critical line **10 exf6 ♛e5+**.

White's most natural reply is 11 ♝e2. It was this that I ran up against the very first time that this position occurred in one of my games (Zagorovsky-Polugayevsky, RSFSR Championship, Voronezh 1959).

But at a training session for Russian Federation players in the summer of that same year at Solnechny, near Leningrad, in a consultation game White played here **11 ♘e4**. The idea of this move belongs to the late Rashid Nezhmetdinov, and consists in returning to Black not the bishop at g5, but the knight. At first sight such a method of defending appears rather strange, but in fact it is not without venom.

Here is how the consultation game continued: 11...♛xe4+ 12 ♘e2 (clearly unsatisfactory is 12 ♝e2 ♛xg2 13 ♝f3 ♛xg5 14 ♝xa8 ♛h4+; incidentally, this rather simple variation unexpectedly occurred later, in 1967, at a tournament in Zwolle, in a game between two strong players, Ghitescu and Kavalek. White apparently overlooked the check at h4, and suffered a rapid defeat after 15 ♔f1 ♛xf6+ 16 ♘f3 ♝c5 17 ♛d3 0-0 18 ♔g2 ♜d8 19 ♛e2 ♛g6+ 20 ♔f1 e5 21 h3 ♝e6 22 b3 ♘d7 23 ♝c6 ♝f5 24 ♝xd7 ♝xd7 25 ♛xe5 ♛xc2) 12...♘c6 13 ♛d2 ♜a7 14 0-0-0 ♜d7 15 ♘c3!

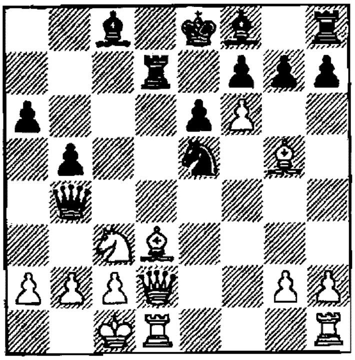


White's idea is clear: the ending is favourable for him in view of the weakness of Black's queenside pawns (after a timely a2-a4) and – in certain variations – the square d6.

Besides, the exchange of queens and one pair of rooks by no means fully relieves Black of concern over the square d8, which the bishop at g5 continues to observe by 'X-ray'.

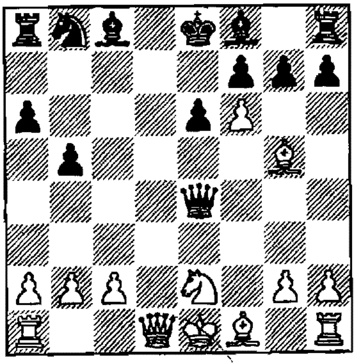
For this reason, Black stayed in the middlegame, 15...♕b4, and after the following great complications the game ended in a draw: 16 ♗d3 ♘e5 17 ♔b1 ♘c4 18 ♗xc4 ♖xd2 19 ♖xd2 gxf6 20 ♗xf6 ♗e7 21 ♗xb5+ axb5 22 ♗xh8 ♗b7 23 ♗d4! ♕a5 24 a3 b4 25 axb4 ♗xb4 26 ♖e2 ♕a6 27 ♖e3 ♗xg2 28 ♖g1 ♗d6 29 ♖d3 ♕c6 30 ♖d2 ♗f3 31 ♗f6 ♔f8, and so on.

After the game, analysing in the main the opening stage, we jointly came to a definite conclusion: in the following position



White can gain an advantage by 17 a3, since the black queen has no retreat other than to a5 (17...♕c5 and 17...♕d6 are both met by 18 ♘e4), from where it loses control over d6. Then 18 ♕e1! gives White a clear advantage, while after 17...♘xd3+ he again does not object to an ending: 18 ♕xd3.

Such a turn of events disheartened me somewhat, since virtually all Black's moves are forced, with the possible exception of 12...♘c6. But I considered this particular move to be obligatory, since earlier, in an analysis of the following position



Nezhmetdinov had refuted time after time my attempts to block the access of the white pieces to d8 by 12...♘d7. I could find no way to hold the position after the simple 13 fxg7 ♗xg7 14 ♕d6. And although in the USSR Spartakiad, immediately after the training session referred to, Nezhmetdinov lost in this variation to Gurgenidze (that game went 14...♗f8 15 ♕d2 h6 16 ♗e3 ♕b4 17 c3 ♕d6 18 ♘d4 e5 19 ♕e2 ♕e7 20 ♘f5 ♕e6 21 g4 ♗b7 22 ♗g2 e4 23 0-0 ♖g8 24 a4 ♘e5 25 h3 h5 26 g5 ♘f3+ 27 ♖xf3 exf3), it was clear that after 12...♘d7 Black's position did not inspire confidence.

Jumping ahead a little, I should mention that this conclusion received a convincing demonstration in the game Kotkov-Tilevich, in a tournament of masters and candidate masters at Cheboksary, in 1960. Black decided to manage without the move 15...h6, against which 16 ♗f4 deserves consideration (after 16...♕b4 17 c3 Black is denied the d6 square, while on 16...e5 White replies 17 ♗g3 followed by 0-0-0), and played 15...♕b4 immediately. There followed 16 c3 ♕d6 17 ♘d4 f6 (17...e5 nevertheless signifies loss of control over a whole complex of central squares: 18 ♕e3 is possible, or even 18 ♘f5) 18 ♗h4 ♗g7 19 0-0-0 0-0.

It is obvious that the resulting position favours White. He energetically exploited his advantage: 20 ♕e3 (aiming towards e6)

20...♕e5 (on 20...♘e5, 21 ♗g3 is strong, while 21 ♘f5 is also pretty unpleasant) 21 ♕f3! (gaining a tempo by the attack on the rook, and intending to exploit the advanced position of the black queen as a target for attack) 21...♘b6 22 ♗d3 (the simplest: White's offensive develops unhindered) 22... ♘d5 23 ♔b1 (prophylaxis: the threat is now 24 ♖he1) 23...♕f4 24 ♕h5 ♕h6 25 ♕xh6 ♗xh6 26 ♗e4 ♖a7 27 ♖he1, and White's overwhelming advantage is beyond dispute.

All this appeared perfectly convincing (we had also examined similar continuations during our training session), but one thought constantly nagged away in my mind: the moves 11 ♘e4 followed by 12 ♘e2 are very clumsy. Could it really be that, despite their antipathy, they were so strong that they could immediately cast the whole Variation onto the scrap heap?

Anyone who in his work has had occasion to be an author – irrespective of what: an engineering project, a story, or a chess system – knows how important his brain-child is, and how much he wants it to be accepted and to receive recognition. And I decided to continue my searchings, by once again going through the score of the game played at the training session. My analysis commenced with 12...♘c6. Several obligatory replies for both sides followed, and on the board once again was reached the position after White's 15th move, as given on p.37.

In it I succeeded in finding a different queen move to that in the training game: 15...♕e5. Calculation confirmed that this was stronger, and that at e5 the queen was much more comfortably placed than at b4. I give here in full the whole of the analysis made then, in 1959, quite deliberately, without correcting it, and with precisely nothing changed. Even if the reader should discover in it some inaccuracies or mistakes, he will realise what a maze I had to go through, so as to uphold my idea, and to retain the right to adopt The Variation in practice.

And so, 15...♕e5 16 ♗d3 gxf6.

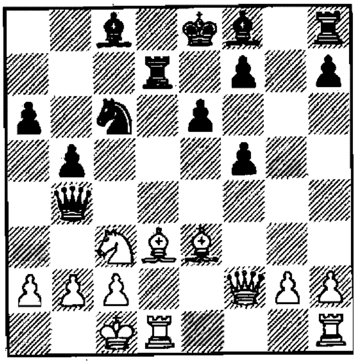
17 ♖he1 was threatened, and the pawn has to be taken, if only so as to know for what Black is suffering.

17 ♗f4 ♕d4 18 ♗e3 ♕b4.

Incidentally, a year later at the tournament in Buenos Aires, this position occurred in the game Olafsson-Reshevsky. Black once again moved his queen to e5, 18...♕e5, and after 19 ♗f4 ♕d4 20 ♗e3 ♕e5 21 ♗f4 a draw was agreed. I do not think that White is obliged to agree to a repetition of moves. The position is extremely sharp and full of life, and White has various alternatives at his disposal: 19 ♖he1, 19 ♕f2 and 19 ♖hf1, although in the first case he has to reckon even with 'pawn-grabbing' such as 19... ♕xh2, in the second – with 19...♗a3, and if 20 ♔b1, then nevertheless 20...♗xb2, and in the third – with 19...♗b4.

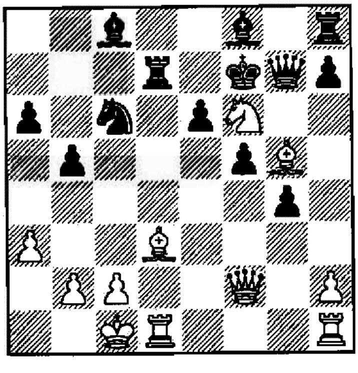
What forced me to analyse 18...♕b4 was, in the first instance, the aggressive nature of my chess character. What sickened me was the thought that, whereas Black had to go in for such complications and risks, in the event of 18...♕e5 White could, if he wished, force a draw without any trouble. Although I realised that, in principle, a draw should be considered a 'gain' for Black.

At first it appeared to me that after 18...♕b4 Black's position was nevertheless alright (despite the obvious defects in the positioning of his queen, compared with its place at e5), since after 19 a3 ♕a5 20 ♕f2 b4 he has counterplay (e.g. 21 ♗b6 ♕e5, or even 21...♗c5). But then I discovered that White can play 19 ♕f2, and this is much stronger than the immediate 19 a3. Now the pawn at f6 is hanging, and ♘e4 is threatened. If, for instance, 19...♕e7, then 20 ♘e4 ♗g7 21 ♗c5, and it is unlikely that White's attack can be resisted. I therefore considered the main continuation for Black after 19 ♕f2 to be 19...f5.



Now the plausible 20 ♗xf5 fails to 20...exf5 21 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 22 ♘d5 ♕d6 23 ♖d1 ♗h6, when 24 ♘b6 is met by the elegant 24...♕c5! (25 ♖e1 ♗e6). On 20 a3 the black queen retreats: 20...♕e7, when the move which causes Black the most difficulty is the aggressive 21 g4.

Now 21...fxg4 is essential (on 21...♘e5 there follows not, of course, 22 gxf5 ♘g4 23 ♕f3 ♘xe3 24 ♕xe3 ♕c5 25 ♖he1 ♕xe3+ 26 ♖xe3 ♗h6, but the simple 22 ♗e2, and White retains all the advantages of the opponent's king being stuck in the centre; also bad is 21...♗g7 22 gxf5 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♕xa3+ 24 ♔b1, and it is Black's king, rather than White's, which will come under attack) 22 ♘e4 f5 (forced, otherwise there follows 23 ♗g5) 23 ♗g5! (all the same!) 23...♕g7 24 ♘f6+ ♔f7.



On reaching this fantastic position, I once again felt pleased: the white bishop at g5 is hanging, and Black seems to be holding on, but then I found for White a move of terrible strength: 25 h4!! Black has essentially only two possible replies: 25...gxh3 and 25...♖d4.

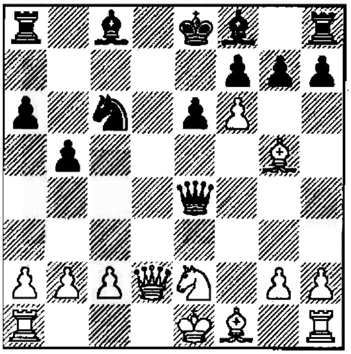
On the first of these there follows 26 ♖hg1 ♗e7 (no better is 26...♖d6 27 ♘e4! ♖d4 28 ♗f4, when the inevitable 29 ♘g5+ again gives White an irresistible attack, while 26...♖xd3 is parried by the simple 27 ♖xd3 ♗e7 28 ♘e4. The attempt 26...♖d4 is also doomed to failure – 27 ♘h5 ♕g6 28 ♗f6 ♕h6+ 29 ♔b1 ♖xd3 30 ♖xd3 ♖g8 31 ♖xg8 ♔xg8 32 ♖xh3, and White's attack is by no means finished; however, the very first move in this line, 27 ♘h5, is not obligatory for White; the quieter 27 ♔b1 is also possible) 27 ♘xd7 ♗xg5+ 28 ♔b1 ♗xd7 29 ♗xf5, with a very strong attack.

In the event of 25...♖d4 White continues simply 26 c3 ♖d6 27 ♘xg4, retaining all the advantages of his position.

After all this anxiety and searching, Nezhmetdinov's idea underwent a new test at the 1961 USSR Championship in Baku. In our meeting the draw gave him the white pieces. An outstanding master of combination, who more than once had inflicted defeats by direct attacks on such great players as Spassky and Tal, my recent 'neighbour' on the Volga, Nezhmetdinov, almost invariably opened with the advance of his king's pawn.

On this occasion we both, without prior agreement of course, firmly decided to play The Variation; Nezhmetdinov – because he always upheld his ideas as a matter of principle – and I, for the same reason. But already before the game there was an advantage on Black's side, since during my endless analysis I had succeeded in finding a move to breathe new life into the apparently dying Variation.

We made the first 13 moves instantly, and in the following position the 'mine' was detonated:



13 . . .h6!

Here I should digress for a moment from specific analysis, and recall once again what it was that caused me to search for a new continuation in this particular position.

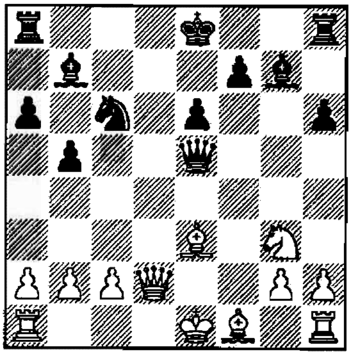
First of all – common sense. However risky The Variation was, I thought, it was just not possible that White should refute it by removing from the centre his excellently-placed knight from d4 to e2, thereby losing time and hindering the development of his own pieces. Of course, surprises, normally unpleasant ones, have frequently awaited Black in The Variation, and will continue to do so, but so-called intuition strongly suggested to me that on this occasion White was seeking a refutation of The Variation in a blank space, and that the golden truth lay elsewhere. It was a general understanding of what had long since become familiar problems, which caused me to seek a defence here, rather than by further move-by-move analysis. After all, at this particular moment White himself has withdrawn his actively-placed pieces, and for a certain time the only piece which is still available for sharp attacking possibilities is the bishop at g5. This means that Black should not bother with prophylaxis such as 13...♖a7, as played earlier, but should utilise this favourable opportunity to drive the bishop from its active position.

I have to admit that, when I found the move 13...h6, for a certain time I was unable, due to excitement, to continue the analysis. It became clear to me that Nezhmetdinov's idea of 11 ♘e4, which appeared so menacing, would be cut off at the root by this modest pawn advance, and that the triumph of The Variation in this line would be complete. During the game I was particularly glad that the innovation was being employed against the actual inventor of this system of attack.

14 ♗e3 ♗b7 15 ♘g3

The first fruits of the innovation: at the board White fails to choose the strongest route for his knight. However, 15 ♘c3 would have been met by the simple 15... ♕h4+ and 16...♕xf6, while in the event of 15 fxg7 ♗xg7 16 0-0-0 ♖d8 17 ♘c3 Black has both 17...♖xd2, with a reasonable ending, and 17...♕g5. His opening difficulties are behind him.

15...♕e5 16 fxg7 ♗xg7



Here we can sum up: the strategic plan of The Variation has been implemented one hundred per cent. Black is excellently developed, and the placing of his bishops is particularly good. This allows his position to be considered the more promising.

17 ♗d3 ♘b4!

The time lost by White on his knight manoeuvres begins to tell: in evacuating his king, he is forced to part with one of his bishops.

18 0-0 ♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♖d8 20 ♕e2 h5!

Leaving his king in the centre, Black begins an attack.

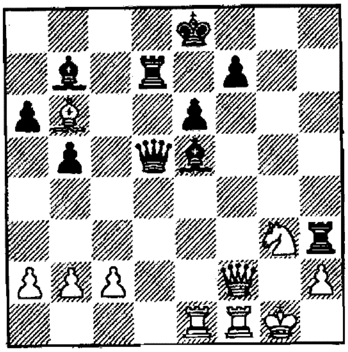
21 ♖ae1?

A serious mistake, after which White's position is barely defensible. 21 ♕f2 is correct, although even then 21...♕xe3 22 ♕xe3 ♗d4 23 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 gives Black the better chances in the ending.

21...h4 22 ♕f2 ♖d7 23 ♘e2 h3 24 gxh3

On 24 ♗d4 Black has the very strong reply 24...♕xd4. But now the devastated residence of the white king creates a painful impression.

24...♖xh3 25 ♘g3 ♕d5 26 ♗b6 ♗e5



The threat of 27...♖xg3+ forces White to part with the exchange. But his misfortunes do not end there: the second 'storm column' – the f-pawn – is sent forward.

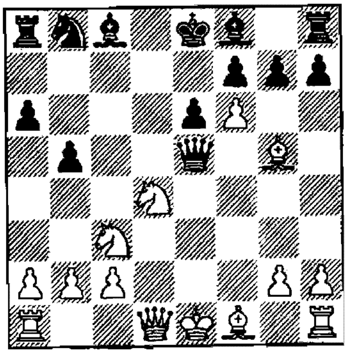
27 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 28 ♖e1 ♕g5 29 ♗e3 ♕g4 30 ♖f1 f5 31 ♗f4 ♖d1 32 c3 ♖h4 33 ♗c7 f4 34 ♕xf4 ♕xf4

White resigns. After 35 ♗xf4 ♖xf1+ 36 ♘xf1 ♖xf4 he comes out a rook down.

The impression made by this game was so great, and the virtues of the move 13...h6 were so obvious, that the Nezhmetdinov system immediately lost its topicality, and subsequently there were essentially no more serious games played on this theme. For The Variation there was one less 'enemy'...

AT THE SOURCE

But let us revert to chronology. The move 11 ♘e4 demanded of me considerable mental effort and a mass of time, but when I was first analysing The Variation, it simply did not enter my head. As I have already mentioned, the first time I reached this position



in practice, I had to do battle against 11 ♗e2, which was played by Vladimir Zagorovsky. But I was also prepared for another possible continuation: 11 ♕e2.

Moreover, this was the move that was first subjected to analysis, since after it play is to a certain extent forced, and if after 11 ♕e2 Black were unable to find adequate counterplay, the whole idea of The Variation would turn out to be false.

In reply to 11 ♕e2 Black has no choice: 11...♕xg5 12 ♘e4 ♕e5 13 0-0-0 ♖a7. This move is essentially forced, since Black must in the first instance neutralise both the opponent's lead in development, and his threats down the d-file.

The attempt 13...♗b7 appears dubious, in view of the strong reply 14 ♕d2!

Earlier I had thought that White wins immediately by 14 ♘xb5 axb5 15 ♕d2, as in the first game with The Variation to be played and published, Reicher-Krogius (it is curious that in this position Krogius offered a draw), and then 15...♗d5 (15...♕d5 16 ♗xb5+ ♗c6 17 ♕f4 ♕xa2 18 ♕xb8+) 16 ♗xb5+. Black does indeed lose after 16...♘c6 17 ♖he1, or 16...♘d7 17 ♖he1 ♖xa2 18 ♘c3. But later the Dutch master van der Vliet (who wrote a substantial book about my Variation and upheld the virtues of 7...b5, for which I am very grateful to him) found an excellent possibility: 16...♔d8! 17 ♘g5 ♖xa2 18 c3 ♖a1+ 19 ♔c2 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♔c7 21 ♘xf7 ♗b3+!, seizing the initiative.

14...♗xe4 15 ♘xb5 ♗d5 16 ♗c4 axb5 17 ♖he1 ♕d6 (bad is 17...♕xe1 18 ♗xb5+ ♘d7 19 ♖xe1 ♔d8 20 c4, or 17...♕xf6 18 ♕xd5 ♗e7 19 ♗xb5+ ♔f8 20 ♕xa8) 18 ♗xd5 ♖a6. Van der Vliet evaluates this position as unclear, but in fact White wins easily after 19 ♕g5! g6 20 ♗xe6 fxe6 21 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 22 ♖xe6+ ♔d7 (22...♔f7 23 ♕d5 ♗f4+ 24 ♖e3+ ♔xf6 25 ♕f3 ♔g5 26 h4+) 23 ♕d5.

It was then that the main strategic idea of this line of The Variation came into my head: by the transfer of the rook to d7 via a7, to parry White's basic threat – his attack along the d-file.

14 ♕e3.

In my analysis it was this move that I considered strongest. In a game from a Ukrainian tournament between Leonid Stein and Yuri Sakharov in 1960, White played differently: 14 ♘f3(?) ♕f4+ 15 ♔b1 ♖d7 16 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 17 g3 ♕c7. Now White's undefended pawn at f6 is forced to help Black with his development: 18 fxg7 ♗xg7 19 ♕d2 0-0.

Black has the two bishops, and objectively speaking his position is already preferable. In order to avoid coming under an attack, White exchanged queens: 20 ♕d6 ♕xd6 21 ♘xd6 ♘b6 22 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 23 c3 ♘a4! 24 ♗d3? ♘xb2, and Black won within a few moves. Of course, White was not bound to blunder on his 24th move, but even after 24 ♗g2 b4 the initiative is with Black.

Clearly, the attack on the black queen by 14 ♘f3 is premature. The move 14 ♕e3 prepares it, without allowing the black queen in at f4, but even in this case Black has perfectly adequate resources for creating counterplay: 14...♖d7 15 ♘f3 ♖xd1+ 16 ♔xd1 ♕c7 17 ♗d3 ♘d7. After 18 fxg7 Black can again count on obtaining the initiative, while 18 ♕d4 g6 19 ♔e2 e5! 20 ♕e3 h5! followed by ...♗h6, ...0-0 and ...♗b7 also enables him to face the future with confidence.

This analysis, which was carried out as long ago as 1958, convinced me that after 11 ♕e2 it is White, rather than Black, who has reason to be afraid...

Then came the time for the analysis of the main and most interesting line, continuing from the position in the diagram on p.42:

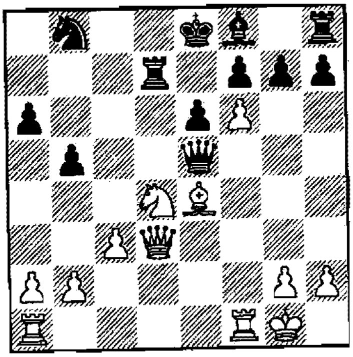
11 ♗e2 ♕xg5 12 0-0 ♖a7

This was the course taken by my game against **Vladimir Zagorovsky** (Voronezh 1959), which has already been mentioned, and which gave life to The Variation.

In passing I should mention that the analysis of other moves: (a) 12...gxf6 13 ♘e4 ♕e3+ 14 ♔h1 ♘d7 15 ♗f3 ♗b7 (15...♖a7 16 ♘c6 ♖c7 17 ♘xf6+) 16 ♘xf6+, (b) 12...♗c5 13 ♔h1 ♕e5 14 ♗f3 ♖a7 15 fxg7 ♖g8 16 ♘c6 ♘xc6 17 ♗xc6+ ♗d7 18 ♕f3, or (c) 12...♗b7 13 ♗f3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♖a7 15 ♘e4 could not, of course, bring any satisfaction.

13 ♕d3 ♖d7 14 ♘e4 ♕e5 15 c3 ♗b7 16 ♗f3 ♗xe4 17 ♗xe4

If 17 ♕xe4, then possible is either 17...♕xe4 18 ♗xe4 gxf6, or the immediate 17...gxf6.



17...♗d6!

Of course, Black could also have managed without this move, and contented himself with the simple 17...gxf6, but during the game I considered it advantageous to 'lure' the white pawn to g3: it is after all an additional weakening of White's kingside!

18 g3 gxf6 19 ♔h1

White forestalls an unpleasant and absolute pin on the d4 knight along the a7-g1 diagonal, but he has no possibility of avoiding an almost equally unpleasant relative pin on the knight along the d-file. On the possible 19 ♖ae1 Black would again have replied 19...♗c5, since 20 ♗c6 ♘xc6 21 ♖xe5 fxe5 22 ♕f3 ♖c7 is perfectly satisfactory for him.

19...♗c5 20 ♖ad1 ♔f8!

Black intends to castle artificially, and to bring his second rook into play along the open central file. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that he has an extra pawn (and even two, essentially, since White's queenside majority is insignificant, whereas on the kingside Black has four pawns against two), and he has merely to parry possible tactical threats by his opponent, when the outcome will be settled.

And in the game that is what happened.

21 ♖fe1 ♕g5 22 a4 ♔g7 23 axb5 ♗xd4 24 cxd4 ♕xb5 25 ♕e3 ♖hd8

It is clear that White has lost not only the opening battle, but also the game as a whole. And although the realisation of Black's advantage dragged out for a further thirty and more moves, his material superiority – in the absence, of course, of any blunders on his part – is bound to tell in the end.

26 d5 ♘c6! 27 ♖f1 exd5

Black worked out accurately all the subsequent events, and foresaw the transition into the ending.

28 ♗d3 ♕xb2 29 ♖f5

White has simply no time to win back even one of Black's three extra pawns: 29 ♗xa6 ♕e5, and the threat of a check at e4 is highly unpleasant.

29...♕d4 30 ♕c1 ♘e5 31 ♖h5 ♘xd3 32 ♕h6+ ♔g8 33 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 34 ♖xd3

There is nothing else, but on this occasion the 'traditionally drawn' rook ending proves to be not at all so.

34...♕e4+ 35 ♔g1 ♕xh7 36 ♖xh7 a5

One of Black's passed pawns will now advance 'seriously' towards the queening square, while the other will divert White's attention.

37 ♖h4 d4 38 ♔f2 f5 39 ♔e2 ♔e7 40 ♔d2 ♔e6 41 ♖a3 ♖d5 42 ♔d3 ♔e5 43 ♖a2 ♖a8 44 ♖h6

Black might just play the direct 44...a4??, and be mated by 45 ♖e2.

44...♖b5 45 ♖e2+ ♔d5 46 ♖f2 ♖b3+ 47 ♔c2 ♖ab8

Black's pieces have become so active, and his pawns so strong, that he is prepared to allow the re-establishment of material equality: 48 ♖xf5+ ♔e4 49 ♖xf7 d3+ 50 ♔d1 ♖b1+ 51 ♔d2 ♖8b2+ 52 ♔c3 ♖c2 mate.

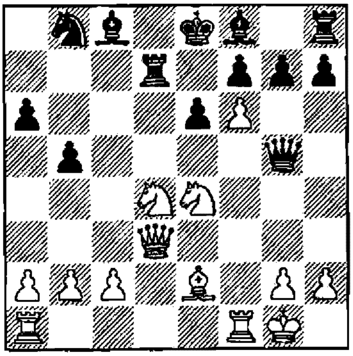
48 ♖d2 a4 49 ♖a6 a3 50 ♖a7 ♖8b7 51 ♖a8 ♖b2+ 52 ♔d3 ♖7b3+ 53 ♔e2 ♖e3+ 54 ♔d1 ♖b1+ 55 ♔c2 ♖b2+ 56 ♔d1 d3 57 ♖d8+ ♔e4 White resigns.

A slight digression. It would appear that this game should have dotted all the 'i's as regards the assessment of the variation involving the capture of the white knight at e4. White, without making a mistake, completely lost the opening battle. But both a year later in the game Lenchiner-Gufeld from the Ukrainian Championship, and eight years later in the Steiner-Szabo encounter from the international tournament in Krems (1967), all this was repeated, although Black avoided the intermediate move 17...♗d6, and played 17...gxf6 immediately.

In the first of these a variation given by me above occurred: 18 ♖ae1 ♗c5 19 ♗c6 ♘xc6 20 ♖xe5 fxe5 21 ♕f3 ♖c7 22 ♔h1 exd4 23 cxd4 ♗xd4 24 ♖c1 ♔d7 25 ♕xf7+ ♔c8 26 ♕xe6+ ♔b7, and Black realised his advantage. In the second game everything was much simpler: 18 ♖ae1 ♗c5 19 ♔h1 ♗xd4 20 ♗c6 ♘xc6 21 ♖xe5 ♗xe5, and it was time for White to resign.

How is such a dramatic coincidence to be explained? Clearly the players with White were simply not familiar with the Zagorovsky-Polugayevsky game.

Earlier, back in 1959, i.e. practically at the same time as us, Gligoric and Bhend played a game with The Variation at the tournament in Zurich. But the Swiss master had clearly not spent sleepless nights in analysis, and went wrong in the following position by moving his queen to a different square.



14...♕g6.

Black soon had cause to regret this: **15 ♕e3! ♗b7 16 ♗f3 ♕h6.**

It turns out to be very difficult to find an alternative for Black, since the natural 16...gxf6 is met by 17 ♘xe6!, and wins (17...fxe6 18 ♗h5), and he has no other way of completing his development.

In the game White continued 17 ♕xh6 gxh6 18 ♘b3, when it became clear that Black stood badly. He was forced to play 18...♗xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗d6 20 ♖ae1 (in order to answer 20...♗e5 with the simple 21 c3) 20...♖c7 21 c3 ♘d7 22 ♘a5 0-0 23 ♖d1 ♗e5 24 ♗c6 ♘c5 (if 24...♘xf6, then 25 ♖de1) and now again 25 ♖de1. There followed 25...♗d6 26 ♖e2 ♘d3 27 ♗e4, and White, having retained his advantage, gradually converted it into a win.

Returning to the source game, to my encounter with Zagorovsky, I can only add that, out of the many hundreds of games I have played, I was probably more anxious in this one than in any other. My tournament colleagues could not understand the reason for this intense excitement. At the time I naturally was unable to explain this, but I myself knew that a new variation was being born, or more precisely, a new scheme with a whole network of highly complex variations... Moments can occur which, as it were, raise a man above his humdrum, everyday self. It was this that I experienced during my game with Zagorovsky, and for it (and not only for points in the tournament table) I am grateful in the first instance to The Variation.

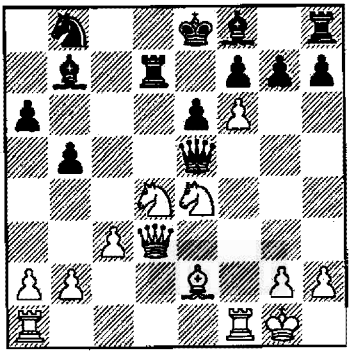
But let us come back down to earth. The game received wide coverage in the Soviet press, and became a topic for study by many theorists, and practical players too, while in international tournaments (as I have already mentioned) even several years later one could come across 'copies' of the game, where the players with White, being unfamiliar with it, plunged in similar fashion into a lost position.

RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE

The next landmark in my research into The Variation was my game with Bagirov, played in January 1960 in the USSR Championship in Leningrad. I recall how, after making my 15th move, I got up from the board, and Vasily Smyslov came up to me and said reproachfully: 'Oh Lyev, Lyev. Why do you take such liberties? All your pieces are on the back rank! You've played this variation once in the Championship, and that's enough! You'd do better to look after your nerves!'

In reply, I made a joke in roughly the following spirit: 'I realise it myself, and my head orders one thing, but my hands do another.' But in fact I definitely knew that I would play The Variation until I encountered a complete refutation of it, and then... I would again get down to analysis. I would seek a refutation of the refutation...

I came up against something of a surprise literally a minute after the given dialogue with Smyslov. **Bagirov**, who before the game had made special preparations for The Variation, played in the diagram position



16 ♕g3. In principle, after the exchange of queens Black has nothing to fear – White can refute his opponent's apparently rather risky strategy only by an attack – and with an easy heart I replied **16...♕xg3** (clearly, 16...♕xe4 17 ♕xb8+ ♖d8 18 ♕g3, with the threats of 19 fxg7, 19 ♗f3 and 19 ♖ae1, is in White's favour) **17 ♘xg3 ♘c6** (five years later in the game Matai-Nicevsky, Yugoslav Championship 1969, Black continued 17...gxf6, and it turned out that after 18 ♘h5 ♗e7 19 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20 ♖xf6 ♖g8 21 ♗f3 ♖g6 22 ♖f4 ♗xf3 23 ♘xf3 ♘c6 24 a4 e5 25 ♖e4 the position had simplified in favour of White, who retains a certain pressure).

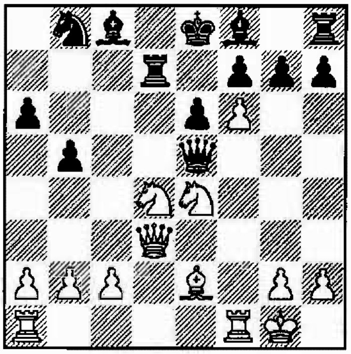
White was practically forced to play **18 ♘b3**, otherwise after 18 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 Black would play his bishop to c5 with check, and at the board I made the most natural move: **18...gxf6**. After **19 ♘e4 ♗e7 20 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 21 ♖xf6 ♔e7 22 ♖f2 ♘e5** the position was still level and markedly simplified, and following **23 a4 ♗c6 24 ♘d4 ♖b8 25 ♖e1 ♖d5 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♘xc6+ ♘xc6 28 ♗f3 ♖c5 29 ♗xc6 a draw** was agreed.

Strictly speaking, Bagirov's continuation did not shake my faith in The Variation, but the fact that White could draw without any particular trouble left me somewhat disillusioned.

However, that very same night after my game with Bagirov, I discovered, much to my annoyance, that, instead of the plausible developing move 17...♘c6, Black had at his disposal the rather curious manoeuvre 17...♖g8, when it turns out that White has to worry both about his g2 square, and, more important, about his knight at d4, since Black threatens the simple 18...♗c5 and then 19...♘c6, winning a pawn. I cursed myself for my haste during the game with Bagirov, but all that remained was to regret my omission.

In this USSR Championship, several times, and highly successfully, I upheld 'my system in practice', to borrow a term from

Nimzowitsch. But after the tournament I wanted to generalise on the accumulated experience. A month later I again sat down to work. And one day, when I was examining the position which had occurred in my games with Zagorovsky and Bagirov, I unexpectedly hit upon a move which had earlier remained unnoticed, both by me, and by my opponents. It turned out that in this position



instead of 15 c3 White can play 15 ♘f3, which sets Black a number of serious problems.

Now Black cannot play 15...♖xd3 16 ♘xe5 ♖e3, when there are two equally strong alternatives: 17 fxg7 ♗xg7 18 ♘d6+ ♔e7 19 ♘xc8+ ♖xc8 20 ♖xf7+ ♔d6 21 ♖xg7 ♖xe2 22 ♘f3, and the simpler 17 ♗d3, with the threat of 18 ♔f2. The white knights similarly do not become entangled if the black rook retreats to d5: 16...♖d5 17 fxg7 ♗xg7 18 ♘xf7 0-0 19 ♘fd6, and the threat of 20 ♖xf8+ and 21 ♘xc8 allows White to gain a tempo for the move c2-c3, and thereby retain his extra pawn.

It may seem paradoxical, but already after these two 'single-branch' variations which were easy to calculate, Black's position immediately ceased to appeal to me. As often happens in chess, the most modest move in the position, 15 ♘f3 (blocking the f-file, along which White is attacking, offering the exchange of queens etc.), proved to be the strongest. And I decided to study the position resulting from this, in which the black queen retreats to c7, although it too did not appear particularly promising. As for the move 15...♕xb2, at heart I immediately condemned it as suicidal, and did not bother to reinforce this feeling with variations.

Here it would seem appropriate for me to give my approximate train of thought, which caused me to reject completely 15...♕xb2.

The point is that, in choosing The Variation, to a certain extent Black acts contrary to the basic laws of chess, which demand rapid mobilisation in the opening. Indeed, in the position after 15 ♘f3 practically all of Black's pieces are still on their initial squares, the black queen has already moved four times, and a further raid into the opponent's position cannot fail to tell against him.

What's more, the basic strategic idea of The Variation is not to gain material, but, by creating threats, to develop the pieces with gain of tempi, and if possible to force White to assist this (e.g. by the capture fxg7). Black can gain tempi both by attacking the knight at e4 (by ...♗b7), and by attacking the white king (by ...♗c5+). And any deviation from this strategic idea, any material-grabbing, makes The Variation, which is already risky for Black, too reckless.

It is interesting that subsequent tournament practice (of other players, of course, since I simply could not act counter to my own logic, and did not once play 15...♕xb2) fully confirmed the correctness of my judgement. The overwhelming majority of games played with the capture on b2 by the queen ended in a rapid and crushing defeat for Black. It is noteworthy that, while many grandmasters could not resist the temptation to employ The Variation, if only once or twice, the move 15...♕xb2 was nevertheless made only by players of lower class, who had evidently not grasped the strategy of The Variation so deeply.

This once again confirmed an ancient truth: first and foremost it is essential to understand the essence, the overall idea of any fashionable variation, and only then include it in one's opening repertoire. Otherwise the tactical trees will conceal from the player the strategic picture of the wood, in which his orientation will most likely be lost.

Thus, for instance, the game Simovich-Vitolinsh, School Children's Spartakiad 1961, went 15...♕xb2 16 ♕e3 (clearly the only move) 16...♗b7.

Boleslavsky recommends as strongest here – and I agree with him – 17 a4.

However, 17 ♖ad1 has also occurred several times in practice: 17...♗xe4 (17...gxf6 is bad on account of 18 ♖b1) 18 fxg7.

In the game Bakulin-Titenko, Moscow 1961, Black went wrong with 18...♗xg7, and after 19 ♕xe4 ♕c3 20 ♔h1 ♕c6 21 ♕b4 ♕c3 22 ♕g4 ♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 0-0 24 ♘g5 h6 25 ♘e4 f5 (25...♕xc2 26 ♘f6+ ♔h8 27 ♗d3 ♕a4! was better) 26 ♘xc3 fxg4 27 ♘e4 an ending was reached, in which Black was unable to defend his weak pawns.

But then in the highly important game van den Berg-Langeweg (Amsterdam 1961) Black played 18...♕xg7! 19 ♕xe4 (in a game between the Russian players Kiryanov and Sorokin in 1961, White tried 19 ♖xd7, but Black replied 19...♗xf3!, and 20 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 21 ♕b6+ ♔e7 22 ♗xf3 ♘d7 23 ♕b7 ♕d4+ 24 ♔h1 ♕b6 25 ♕e4 ♗g7 left him a piece up; Black stands equally well after 22 ♕c5+ ♔d7 23 ♕a7+ ♔c8) 19...♗d6! 20 ♗d3 ♖g8 21 ♖d2 h5!, and one gains the impression that, apart from an extra pawn, Black has also gained the initiative.

The alternative 18 ♕xe4 also does not give White anything, in view of 18...♗c5+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♕xf6.

But White can play more accurately: 18 ♖xd7! ♘xd7 (or 18...♔xd7 19 ♕xe4 ♗c5+ 20 ♔h1 ♘c6 21 ♘g5 with a powerful initiative) 19 ♕xe4 ♗c5+ 20 ♔h1 0-0, and now instead of the incorrect 21 ♘g5? ♘xf6! 22 ♖xf6 ♕c1+ van der Vliet recommends 21 fxg7! ♔xg7 (21...♕xg7 22 ♕c6) 22 ♗d3 ♘f6 23 ♕f4 ♗e7 24 ♘e5, when he would seem to create serious pressure on the kingside.

Therefore the correct solution to Black's problems after 17 ♖ad1 is to first exchange rooks: 17...♖xd1! 18 ♖xd1 ♗xe4 19 ♕a7 ♗d6! 20 fxg7 (or 20 ♖xd6 0-0) 20...♕xg7 21 ♖xd6 0-0.

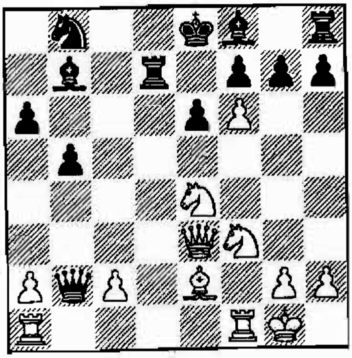
Thus the refutation of Black's 'pawn-grabbing' – 15...♕xb2 – is not to be found in 17 ♖ad1.

White also fails to achieve his aim by 17 fxg7, as occurred in the game Shmit-Kovacevic (USSR v. Yugoslavia, Belgrade 1961) – White incorrectly assists the development of the black pieces. After the practically forced 17...♗xg7 18 ♗d3 ♗d4 19 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 20 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 21 ♘f6+ ♔e7 22 ♖f2 ♘d7 23 ♖af1 ♘e5! 24 ♗xh7 ♖h4 Black gained the advantage.

Finally, the apparently logical move 17 c4, as occurred in the above-mentioned game Simovich-Vitolinsh, was parried by Black with 17...♗xe4 18 ♕xe4 ♕xf6 (in the event of 18...gxf6, after 19 cxb5 axb5 20 ♖ab1 ♗c5+ 21 ♔h1 f5 22 ♕xe6+ fxe6 23 ♖xb2 White gains the advantage – 23... ♔e7 24 ♗xb5), and after 19 ♘e5 (on 19 cxb5 Black had evidently prepared 19... ♗c5+ 20 ♔h1 0-0, and if now 21 ♘e5, then 21...♖d4!) 19...♗c5+ 20 ♔h1 ♖d4 21 ♕e3 ♖d5! 22 ♕g3 (if 22 ♕h3 ♕xe5 23 cxd5 ♕xd5, and after castling Black stands well) 22...♕xe5 23 cxd5 ♕xg3 24 hxg3 ♔e7 25 dxe6 fxe6 an ending arose, in which White's advantage could be discerned only under a microscope. In the game Simovich even managed to lose, but this result had no connection with the opening stage (White blundered with 26 a4??, and after 26...b4 27 ♗c4 ♖d8 Black seized the initiative).

So although Black has to reckon with the move 17 c4, he again apparently has chances of emerging unscathed.

The two continuations that are most dangerous for him are 17 a4 and 17 ♖ab1. It is in these variations that the capture by the queen on b2 has not stood up to practical testing. The game Estrin-Vitolinsh (USSR Championship Semi-Final, Moscow 1963), for instance, concluded rather quickly:

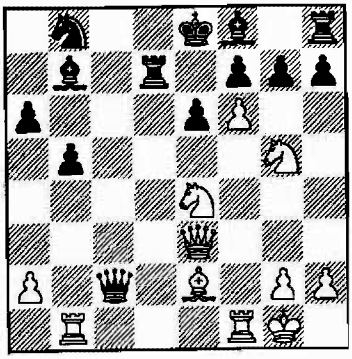


17 ♖ab1 ♕xc2 18 ♘fg5 g6 19 ♖bc1 ♕xa2 20 ♘xf7! (destroying the black king's pawn cover; on 20...♔xf7, 21 ♘g5+ is decisive) 20...♖xf7 21 ♘c3 (White continued even more strongly in the game Goikhman-Petrushkin, 1965: 21 ♕a7! ♘c6 22 ♗xb5!) 21...♕b3 22 ♖b1, and Black was unable to defend e6. He attempted to resort to tactics by 22...♗h6, but 23 ♕g3! ♗f4? 24 ♕h3 ♕a3 25 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 26 ♖xf4 gave White a marked advantage.

True, the picture became rather less clear after the game Parma-Tatai (Athens 1967), when instead of 18...g6 Black replied 18...♕c7!, and White's attacking forces proved insufficient to break down his opponent's defence, now reinforced by the queen. Parma chose 19 fxg7 ♗xg7 20 ♘xe6 fxe6 21 ♘g5, but after 21...♕e5! 22 ♗h5+ ♔d8 23 ♕b6+ ♔c8 24 ♘xe6? (24 ♖bc1+ ♘c6 25 ♖xc6+ ♔b8!, and Black wins) 24...♕d4+! Black went on to win.

This line was never tested again in practice, but I consider nevertheless that it is favourable for White. In my opinion, he should not be in a hurry to capture on g7.

Black, it is true, once achieved a stunning success, when after 15...♕xb2 16 ♕e3 ♗b7 17 ♖ab1 ♕xc2 18 ♘fg5

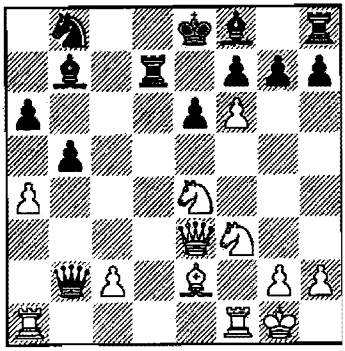


he made the paradoxical move 18...♖g8, which *Chess Informator* No.3 promptly accompanied with two exclamation marks.

Indeed, in the correspondence game Reynolds-Boese, 1967, after 19 ♖bc1 ♕xa2 20 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 21 ♘c3 gxf6! 22 ♖f2 ♕a3 23 ♗h5 ♖xg2+! 24 ♖xg2 ♗c5 White had to resign.

However, Black's 'improvement' does not alter the assessment of the capture on b2, and if it had been a strong player with White in this game, I am sure that, not only in correspondence play, but also at the board, he would have found the refutation of Black's 18th move. After 19 ♖bc1 ♕xa2 White only had to find 20 ♕g3!, and Black would have been defenceless. A possible conclusion is 20...♘c6 21 ♖xc6! ♗xc6 22 ♕b8+ ♖d8 23 ♕c7 ♗d7 24 ♗h5! g6 25 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 26 ♕xd6, and mate next move.

It remains for us to consider the main continuation 17 a4.



This is what Novopashin played against Volovich (Sochi 1961), tackling the problems in the diagram position by quiet, purely positional means, which, incidentally, are highly unpleasant for Black. White's idea is simple: 18 axb5 and 19 ♖ab1. Black's attempt to prevent the opening of lines by 17...b4 (his problems are also not solved by 17...♗xe4 18 ♕xe4 ♗c5+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xf6 20 axb5 0-0 21 bxa6 or, as occurred in the much later game Am.Rodriguez-Stangl, Biel 1988, 17...♕b4 18 c4 ♗xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♕c5+ 20 ♔h1 b4 21 ♕f4 ♗d6 22 fxg7 ♖g8 23 ♕h6 ♗e5 24 ♕xh7!? ♖xg7 25 ♕h8+ ♔e7 26 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 27 ♕h4+! ♕g5 28 ♕f2!, and the position of the black king gives cause for alarm) was unsuccessful: 18 c3! ♗xe4 (18...bxc3 19 fxg7 ♗xg7 20 ♖fb1 ♕c2 21 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 22 ♘d6+) 19 ♕xe4 ♗c5+ 20 ♔h1 gxf6 21 ♖fc1 (shutting out the black queen) 21...0-0 22 ♖ab1 ♕a2 23 cxb4 ♗e7 24 b5, and despite being a pawn down, White has the better position. After 24...f5 25 ♕e3 axb5 (25...♕xa4 26 bxa6 ♘xa6? 27 ♖a1) 26 ♗xb5 ♖dd8 27 ♕h6! ♔h8 28 ♘e5 White went on to win, since to the very end of the game Black was unable to move his knight from its initial post at b8.

If, in addition, one adds that after 17 ♖ab1 Black also has considerable problems, it is not difficult to appreciate just how anti-positional the capture with the queen on b2 is.

Thus on finding the move 15 ♘f3, I immediately decided that I would retreat – 15...♕c7, and thought to myself: 'The knight move didn't occur to me straight away, so perhaps others too won't hit upon it so quickly!' But shortly after this Mikhail Tal was in Moscow for some reason, and in conversation with me he remarked in passing:

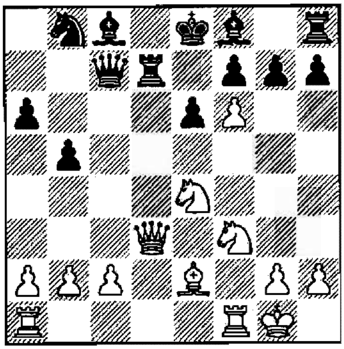
'You know, in your Variation after 13...♖d7 14 ♘e4 ♕e5 White can retreat his knight.'

And he gave 15 ♘f3...

'I know, Misha,' I replied dispiritedly, 'and I'm very concerned about it.'

Our conversation dispelled all my illusions: anything that is known by two people soon becomes the property of everyone. This meant that I would have to do battle against 15 ♘f3 in the very near future.

And that is what happened. The first to employ it in a game with me was **Novopashin** in that same year, 1960, in the USSR Championship Semi-Final in Vilnius. I replied **15...♕c7**, and the dispute began.



16 ♕e3 g6

In some opening books this move was subsequently considered to lead to equality, but in fact all Black's troubles lie ahead. The alternative, 16...♗b7 17 ♘fg5 ♗xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♕a7 19 ♕xa7 ♖xa7 20 c4, which occurred in the game Murey-Feldman (Moscow v. Leningrad, 1965) also maintained for White a marked advantage.

17 c4

In a slightly later game Kuindzhi-Vasilchuk, from a junior tournament in 1960, White played 17 ♔h1, which despite its slow appearance is also fairly good. After 17...♗b7 18 a4 Black played the extremely risky 18...♕xc2 (18...b4 is correct) 19 ♘fg5 h6, when White's attack became spectacularly decisive: 20 ♖ac1 ♕xb2 21 ♕a7 ♘c6 22 ♖xc6! ♕xe2 23 ♕b8+ ♖d8 24 ♖xe6+ fxe6 25 f7+ ♔e7 26 ♕c7+ ♖d7 27 ♕c5+, and Black, threatened with inevitable mate, resigned.

17...b4

To allow White to open the c-file would be equivalent to suicide.

18 ♔h1

This allows Black the chance to draw breath.

18...♗b7 19 ♖ad1 h5!

This tactical nuance – on 20 ♘fg5 Black replies 20...♗h6, with the threat of 21 ♗xe4 – enables him to stand firm on the edge of the abyss. It appears that at any moment White will carry out a thematic blow, sacrificing at f7 or e6, but for this he is always one tempo short.

20 ♘eg5 ♗c5 21 ♕e5 ♗d6!

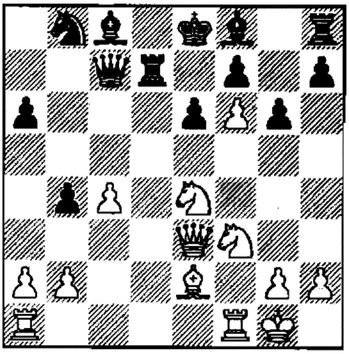
It was for the sake of this move that the black bishop changed direction a move earlier. White is forced either to repeat moves, or, as occurred in the game, to sacrifice the exchange, which however is sufficient only for a draw.

22 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 23 ♘xf7 ♔xf7

The attempt to avoid perpetual check is clearly in White's favour: 23...♕xe5 24 ♘xe5 ♖c7 25 f7+.

24 ♘g5+ ♔f8 25 ♘xe6+ ♔f7 26 ♘g5+, and the players agreed to a **draw**.

Straight away Novopashin and I made a fairly thorough analysis of the critical position



and established that, instead of 18 ♔h1, by 18 ♗d1 White could have gained a marked and possibly decisive advantage. This move became known in the circle of leading Russian Federation players, and was later tested in the 1961 Championship of the Voronezh region in the game Zagorovsky-Kaverin.

That game went 18 ♗d1 ♗b7 19 ♗a4 ♗c6 20 ♗xc6 ♘xc6 21 ♖ad1, and Black's position began to crack up. He was not even saved by the 'patent' 21...h5 22 c5 ♗h6 23 ♕e2 0-0 24 ♕xa6, when White had an extra pawn and the better position. But by that time, to me (after the game with Novopashin I didn't spare a single day more analysing the resulting position) it was already clear that the move 15...♕c7, just like 15...♕xb2, did not solve the problems facing Black.

To be frank, at this point I felt really dejected. Could it be that this modest move 15 ♘f3 would completely refute Black's plan and bury The Variation, which had endured and suffered so much? The Variation, on which had been spent such masses of effort, time and nervous energy, and with which so few games had yet been played? It is true that with cold reasoning, which had been pushed somewhere into the background, I realised that The Variation could not be completely irreproachable, that it had its deficiencies, and that sooner or later the logic of chess would triumph. But that the refutation should come so soon... My entire nature protested against this, and, regardless of common sense, the decision was made: to seek again! To seek and seek until I found that fresh idea which in the critical position would instil the despondent black pieces with life, and enable the situation on the board to be assessed differently.

A GLANCE FROM THE SIDE

A large part of the time spent on preparing for the 1961 USSR Championship had to be given over to The Variation. And the impossible came to pass. I recall how then, on the completion of my work, two thoughts stayed with me for a long time. One was of the boundless and inexhaustible nature of chess, which is in no way associated with the astronomical number of moves present in every position. The depth of chess lies in the wide variety of ideas and methods by which any position on the board is characterised, and in those exceptions which are almost always present in any particular piece arrangement.

And the second thought: how fortunate chess was to have the harmonious coexistence between, on the one hand, Steinitz, Capablanca and Botvinnik, who by their games and analyses discovered the general laws and logic of chess, and, on the other hand, Chigorin, Lasker and Simagin, those 'rebels', who sought and found exceptions to these general rules. Complementing one another, these two streams – classical and romantic – have created and will continue to create a form of chess which no man of any era or generation will fully comprehend or exhaust. And, proceeding from such a proximity of rules and exceptions, one should perhaps not be so frightened by the thought that, in opening theory too, the classical schemes of the Queen's Gambit are to be found alongside the at times completely impenetrable labyrinths of the Sicilian Defence.

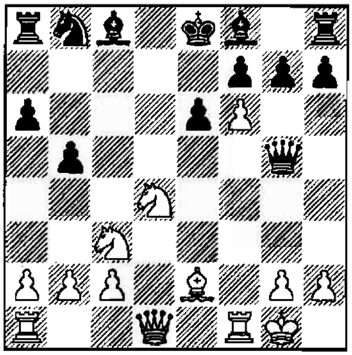
Here I will permit myself one further digression. I trust the reader will not find too far-fetched and bombastic these arguments about questions which are far broader than the analysis of any variation, however complex.

At times a chess player cannot get by merely by working out moves and continuations. Just as an artist painting a picture should from time to time break off from making individual brush strokes, and, taking a step back, take in the complete canvas at a glance, so a chess player, by simply resorting to an abstract approach, is able as if from the side to assess his ideas and calculations, examine the impasse lying in wait for him, and find that turn which is able to lead the position out onto the highway of chess practice. And if one fails to think from time to time over the course of the chess process as a whole, if one does not pay attention to its nuances, to the precedents existing in the assessment of this or that position, then most of the 'concrete' searching will be doomed to failure.

As an analogy, one can recall that today the mathematical apparatus is used by virtually all sciences, but that without philosophy, mathematics itself would have reached an impasse in the study of 'unusual' worlds, concepts and characteristics.

I would say that it was this complex of philosophical thoughts about the essence of my searching which suggested to me a paradoxical idea: why had I been drawn, as if by a magnet, to base the whole of my analysis on the manoeuvre ...♖a7-d7, which I considered the flesh and blood of The Variation, and its basic strategical backbone? Why had

I not sought the truth on a different path, even if it were not a parallel one? And it was then that I found a move which, I must admit, at first shocked me in the full sense of the word.



12...♕e5

Surely the safety margin in chess can't be so great, I asked myself in astonishment, that in the opening, with one's pieces completely undeveloped, one can make a fourth successive move with the queen, and escape unpunished?

All the accepted – or inborn(?) – classical examples told me that this was a Utopianism. In chess such a thing doesn't, and cannot happen, just as in nature the law of conservation of matter cannot be broken. I was very close to rejecting this move, without bothering to analyse it, and what restrained me, I must confess, was by no means intuition or acute chess perception.

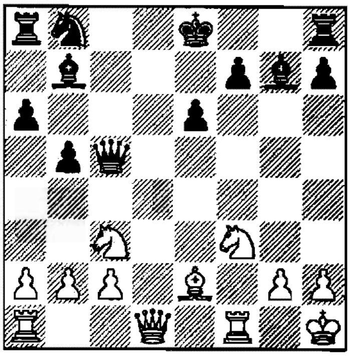
'In the end, this isn't a tournament game, but only analysis,' I argued, and perhaps even tried to persuade myself. 'So much effort has been devoted to The Variation, that it won't do any harm to waste a little more, before admitting defeat.'

But the more that I looked into the idea I had discovered, the more that its paradoxical correctness became apparent. It turns out that 12...♕e5 is by no means a loss of time! After all, the black queen is all the same forced to move to e5 after ♘e4, and by moving there beforehand it denies White this useful activation of his knight. Also, after 12...♕e5, 13...♗c5 is threatened, and this deprives White of a significant part of his lead in development. Finally, by returning in case of necessity to c7, the black queen defends d8, and, having moved out of range of a possible attack, economises on the time required for the manoeuvre ...♖a7-d7.

Now all this appears obvious to me, and hardly worth mentioning, but at the time weeks were spent on grasping these truths, backed by a mass of variations. And when the analysis was complete, I realised this: The Variation was alive!

This work was done, as I recall, in 1960, but I was able to try out my new idea only a year later, in the RSFSR Championship in Omsk, against a local master, **A. Byelov**, an excellent tactician.

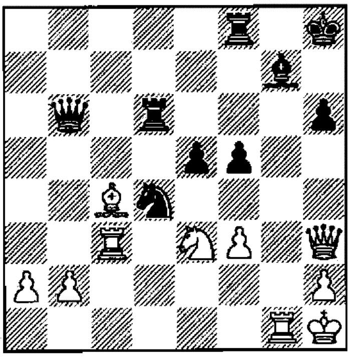
After **12...♕e5** my opponent continued **13 fxg7 ♗xg7 14 ♘f3 ♕c5+ 15 ♔h1 ♗b7**. I had considered this position to be level. However, the further course of the game, although it did not shake this general assessment, showed that the resulting position was so complex and intricate that it required additional analysis.



The game continued:

16 ♕d3 (a very interesting move, by

which White initiates complications) **16... 0-0 17 ♖ad1 ♘c6 18 ♘e4 ♕e7 19 ♘eg5 f5 20 ♕e3 ♖ae8 21 c4! h6 22 cxb5 axb5 23 ♘h3 e5! 24 ♗xb5 ♔h8 25 ♖c1 ♖c8**, and for the pawn Black obtained counterplay in the incredible complications after **26 ♖fe1 ♘b4 27 ♗c4 ♗e4**. The game finally ended in a draw: **28 ♕e2 ♖cd8 29 ♘f2 ♗xf3 30 gxf3 ♘c6 31 ♘d3 ♘d4 32 ♕g2 ♕d6 33 ♖g1 ♖d7 34 ♘f2 ♕f6 35 ♕h3 ♕c6 36 ♖c3**.

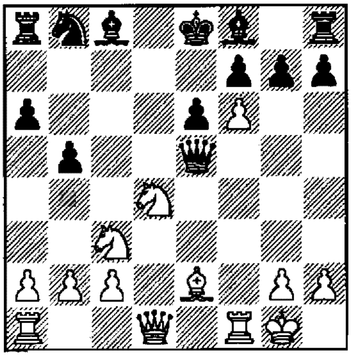


36...♘xf3 37 ♕xf3 e4 38 ♕e3 ♗d4 39 ♗d5 ♕b6 40 ♕c1 ♗xf2 41 ♖c6 ♗e3 42 ♕c3+ ♕d4 43 ♕a3 ♖b8 44 ♕a6 ♗xg1 45 ♖xh6+ ♖h7 46 ♕g6 ♕g7 47 ♖xh7+ ♕xh7 48 ♕f6+ ♕g7 49 ♕h4+, but I gained the feeling that 14...♕c5+, which I had analysed beforehand, was neither obligatory, nor the strongest, and that 14...♕e3+ was perhaps to be preferred.

However, White too did not have to force matters. In the initial position, if one can call it that (*see diagram next column*), he has a number of continuations, which cannot be disregarded.

For example, 13 ♔h1.

After this I didn't care for 13...gxf6, on account of 14 ♗f3 ♖a7 15 ♖e1, and 15...♕c7 looks unattractive in view of 16 ♘d5 ♕d8 17 ♕d2, with the threat of 18 ♕f4, while the black queen has no other convenient retreat square.



But on 13 ♔h1 Black can reply with an immediate 13...♖a7, and the threat of 14...♖d7 forces White to retreat his knight from its central square. Black is not likely to be smashed by such tactics.

This was confirmed, incidentally, by the game Estrin-Korzin (Moscow 1961): 14 ♕d3 (a dubious move; 14 fxg7 ♗xg7 15 ♘f3 is preferable) 14...♖d7 15 ♘f3 ♕xf6 16 ♕e3 ♗d6 17 ♘e4 ♕f4 18 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 19 ♘e5 ♖e7! 20 ♖ad1 ♕c7, and Black repelled the attack, while maintaining his material advantage: 21 ♕g3 0-0 22 ♗d3 f6 23 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 24 ♕h4+ ♔g8 25 ♘g6 ♖ee8! 26 ♕h8+ ♔f7 27 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6.

As the best method of attack for White, the Moscow master Lepyoshkin suggested the knight sacrifice 14 ♕e1!?, giving the following variations: 14...♕xd4 (if 14...gxf6 15 ♘f3 ♕f4 16 a4 b4 17 ♘d2 ♕e5 18 ♘c4 ♕c7 19 ♘e4 ♗e7 20 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 21 ♖xf6, or 19...♘d7 20 ♖d1, and Black's difficulties are not yet over, or 14...♖d7 15 ♗xb5 ♕xd4 16 ♖d1 ♕b6 17 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 18 ♘d5) 15 ♖d1 ♕b6 16 ♘d5 exd5 17 ♗xb5+ ♔d8 18 ♕e8+ ♔c7 19 fxg7 ♗xg7 20 ♕xf7+ ♘d7 21 ♕xg7 ♖e8 22 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 23 ♖xd5, and evaluating the final position in White's favour. However, I should like to dispute this assertion: after 23...♔c8! it is by no means clear who stands better. Although White has three pawns for a piece, the position is of a middlegame character, where in the coming struggle the black bishop is ready to play an important role.

I also had to study energetic variations of the type 13 ♖e1 ♕xf6 14 ♗f3 ♖a7 15 ♘d5 ♕d8 16 ♘f5 ♗c5+ 17 ♔h1 0-0, but nothing definite for White emerged.

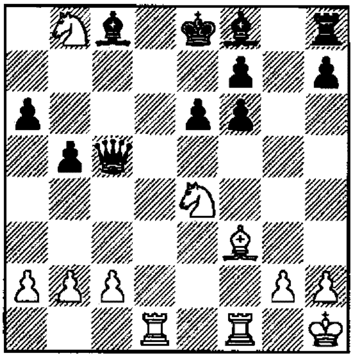
At the time I did not imagine that White's range of possibilities would turn out to be much wider and not restricted to the moves indicated. Many years later I was to experience for myself the 'delights' of both 13 ♗h5 and 13 ♘f3. But these will be described later (cf. pp.104-5), and for the moment let us return to the source games.

The continuation that caused me the most concern was 13 ♗f3 ♖a7 14 ♘c6!? (if 14 ♘e4 ♖d7 15 c3 gxf6, and Black has nothing to fear; the game Ortega-Polugayevsky, Havana 1962, went 14 ♖e1 ♕xf6, and 15 ♗c6+?, as played by White, led to his rapid defeat: 15...♘xc6 16 ♘xc6 ♖d7 17 ♘d5 ♗c5+ 18 ♔h1 ♕h4 19 ♕f3 0-0 20 ♖e4 ♕h6, and White's pieces were left hanging. After 21 ♘f4 ♗b7 22 ♘e5 ♗xe4 23 ♕xe4 ♖d4 he resigned), and I did not care for 14...♘xc6 15 ♗xc6+ ♗d7 16 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 17 ♕f3. Naturally, I therefore considered 14...♕c5+ 15 ♔h1 ♖d7.

If 15...♘xc6, then 16 ♘e4 ♕b6 (equally bad is 16...♕d4 17 ♘d6+!! ♕xd6 18 fxg7 and wins, or 16...♕e5 17 fxg7 ♗xg7 18 ♘d6+ ♔e7 19 ♗xc6 ♕xd6 20 ♖xf7+) 17 fxg7 ♗xg7 18 ♘d6+ ♔e7 19 ♗xc6, and after 19...f5 20 ♘xf5+ exf5 21 ♖e1+ ♔f7 22 ♕d5+ ♔g6 23 ♕d6+ White gains a decisive attack, since 23...♗f6 fails to 24 ♗e8+, while on 19...f6 the quiet 20 ♘xc8+ ♖xc8 21 ♗f3 is sufficient, with an overwhelming position for White, since the black king is stuck in the centre; in this last variation there is an interesting but unclear continuation of the attack by 20 ♘f5+ exf5 21 ♕d5.

16 ♘xb8!! ♖xd1 17 ♖axd1 (17 ♗c6+? ♕xc6 18 ♘xc6 ♖xa1 19 ♖xa1 gxf6, with advantage to Black).

18 ♗c6+ is threatened, and therefore 17...gxf6 is practically forced, when White replies 18 ♘e4.

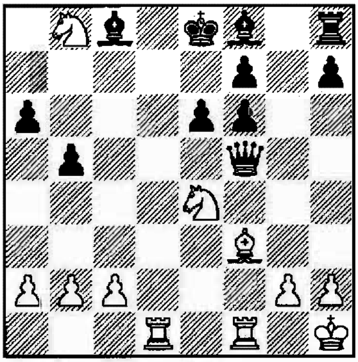


Black is faced with a dilemma: where is he to move his queen? 18...♕e5 loses to 19 ♘c6, while 18...♕b6 meets with a brilliant refutation: 19 ♘xf6+ ♔e7 20 ♗h5!, and if 20...♕xb8 21 ♘g8+ ♖xg8 22 ♖xf7+ ♔e8 23 ♖g7 mate, while on 20...♗g7 or 20...♗h6 White continues 21 ♘c6+!!, diverting the queen from the defence of d8. After 21...♕xc6 Black is mated by 22 ♘g8+ ♔f8 23 ♖xf7+ ♔xg8 24 ♖d8, while after 21...♔f8 (following 20...♗h6), by 22 ♖d8+ ♔g7 23 ♘e8+ ♖xe8 24 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 25 ♖xe8. A fantastic finish!

On 18...♕xc2, 19 ♖c1 concludes the game, and if 18...♕c4 19 b3.

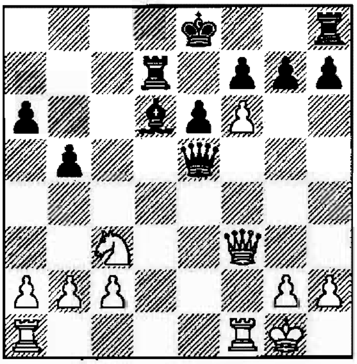
I must ask the reader to believe that all these unusually beautiful variations were neatly written down in one of my notebooks, dated 1960, when I can say without exaggeration that I studied literally day and night the new problems that constantly emerged. It was bound to happen that, seven years later in the game Parr-Klibor (West Germany 1967), the move 13 ♗f3 occurred, with all the 'details' given above! The game reached the position shown in the diagram, when Black chose 18...♕b6 19 ♘xf6+ ♔e7 20 ♗h5, and only here was a deviation made – 20...♕c5, but it made essentially no difference: 21 ♘c6+! led to his immediate capitulation.

Does this mean that I was bluffing? Being fully aware that Black loses by force, did I nevertheless continue to adopt The Variation, hoping for a mistake by my opponent? A thousand times no! In the depths of the maze into which 13 ♗f3 had led me, I nevertheless found a narrow saving path: in the position in that same diagram there is one and only one move that comes to Black's rescue: 18...♕f5!



Now nothing is gained by 19 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 20 ♗c6+ ♔e7 21 ♖xf5 exf5, when Black stands well, while on 19 g4 he replies 19...♕f4. Regaining the sacrificed queen by 19 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 20 ♗c6+ ♔e7 21 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 leads apparently to an equal ending: 22 ♘d7+ ♔e7 23 ♘xf8 ♖xf8, or 22...♗xd7 23 ♖xd7 ♗e7 24 ♗e4 (24 ♖a7 ♖d8) 24...h6 25 ♗d3 ♖d8. Although this variation, which is close to a draw, did not completely impress me, on finding it then, in 1960, I accepted it as a first approximation. The main thing was that I had managed to avoid the danger of a forced loss, and of course I hoped to return again to the move 13 ♗f3 to seek new defensive resources for Black.

But it so happened that other continuations in The Variation diverted my attention, and this work was successfully carried out by the Soviet master German Fridstein, who in 1971 found the strongest continuation for Black, and demonstrated the complete harmlessness of the move 13 ♗f3. He established that after 13...♖a7 14 ♘c6 Black should go in for 14...♘xc6 15 ♗xc6+ ♗d7 16 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7, and in the event of 17 ♕f3 reply not 17...♗c5+ 18 ♔h1 0-0 19 ♘e4, which gives White the advantage, but 17...♗d6!



An important finesse: Black keeps the check in reserve. Here are the variations considered by Fridstein:

A. 18 g3 (18 ♕a8+ ♗b8) 18...♕xf6 19 ♕a8+ ♕d8 20 ♕xa6 b4 21 ♘e4 0-0. This position was tested in the game Mariotti-Ribli (Manila 1976): after 22 ♕b5 ♗e7! 23 c4 ♖d4 24 ♘f2 ♕a8 25 b3 ♖fd8 26 ♕h5 ♗f6 Black stood better.

B. 18 ♕h3 b4! (if Black had first given check – 17...♗c5+, then after 18 ♔h1 ♗d6 19 ♕h3 the move 19...b4 would have been refuted by the surprising rejoinder 20 ♘d5!, when 20...♕xd5 fails to 21 fxg7 and 22 ♕xh7) 19 fxg7 (now 19 ♘d5 does not work, since after the capture of the knight Black has a check with his queen at d4) 19...♖g8 20 ♕xh7 ♕xh2+ 21 ♕xh2 ♗xh2+ 22 ♔xh2 bxc3, but even more convincing is

20...♖xg7! 21 ♕h8+ ♗f8, and, in view of the threat of 22...♖xg2+, White loses a piece.

C. Black has more difficult problems after 18 ♘e4, but even here, by continuing 18...♕xh2+ 19 ♔f2 ♕e5! he can be satisfied with his position. E.g. 20 g3 (after 20 fxg7 ♗c5+! 21 ♔e2 ♖g8 the advantage is with Black; he threatens ..f7-f5) 20...0-0. In this sharp position each side has his trumps.

But let us go back ten years.

At that time, at the cost of many weeks of analysis, I had succeeded in reinforcing The Variation, which had seemed on the point of collapse. It appeared that all was quiet on the Western front, but danger, as it turned out, was already approaching from another side.

A TRAP

Yes, I remember the relief I experienced, and the happy thought which was constantly with me: The Variation was alive! But the period of 'well-being' did not last long. In 1961 new complications began, and by theorists The Variation was again numbered among the ill, and if not fatally, then extremely seriously.

In January 1961, in the 8th round of the USSR Championship, I met **David Bronstein**, possibly the most resourceful grandmaster in the world. The first few moves of the game immediately took me rather by surprise: Bronstein, who had usually avoided this opening, suddenly gave me the opportunity to play The Variation. Naturally I could not refuse the challenge, otherwise for a long time I would have reproached myself for my cowardice and for not sticking to my principles.

And so, after quickly playing the 'introduction' – **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7 10 exf6 ♕e5+ 11 ♗e2 ♕xg5**, Bronstein thought for some 30-40 seconds, gave me a rather crafty glance, and slowly moved his queen to d3. Following this he got up from the board, and his whole appearance said (or possibly this was how I interpreted for myself the resulting situation): 'Now try and work out that little lot!'

Bronstein had hit the nail on the head! However much I had analysed The Variation in the past, and whatever the possibilities for White I had considered, for some strange reason the move 12 ♕d3 had not come within the range of my searching. Nowadays it seems simple, even obvious, but at the time, when only a first approximation to the truth was being made, everything seemed far from clear.

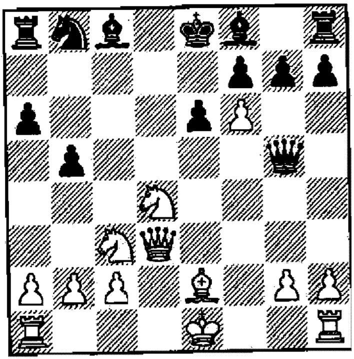
Jumping ahead, I should mention that, after the game, Bronstein said that the idea of the move did not belong to him, but to his old friend Kh. Muchnik, together with whom Bronstein used to constantly examine the topical opening systems that interested him.

But let us return to the game. When the move **12 ♕d3** appeared on the board, I immediately realised that I had been 'caught': I was too well familiar with the manner of my opponent's preparation for it to be otherwise. I had to literally force myself out of a minute's bemusement, and to concentrate fully. I recall how I tried to assume a calm expression, and by my entire appearance demonstrate that nothing extraordinary had happened. Nevertheless, I consider it unlikely that this outward impassivity could have deceived Bronstein, with all his experience...

At the board my study of the new problems which had unexpectedly arisen did not begin, strangely enough, with the calculation of various continuations, but with a thought which was... abstract, but essential for my spiritual peace of mind. It can be formulated roughly as follows: 'How much time have I spent on this one single Variation, and on how many occasions have I found a defence for Black! It would simply be unjust if all this work were in vain! Something will also turn up against 12 ♕d3. I must search, search!'

Having thus 'calmed' myself – incidentally, the time spent on this was less than it takes to read these lines – I began to work through the specific variations. The idea of 12 ♕d3 was perfectly clear: to play ♘e4, if Black should not prevent it, but in particular – to prepare queenside castling. In this case the threats along the d-file would appear much more quickly, and would be much more dangerous, than after kingside castling.

I do not remember, unfortunately, how long I spent at the time in search of a plan. On the other hand, I will never forget how after the game the 'computing machine', as I was sometimes called in those days, felt as though for a long time it had been working under great stress, for which it had not at all been prepared...



Be that as it may, but the reply was **12...♕h4+**. It is difficult to penetrate into such a 'supernatural' field of chess as intuition, but for some reason I felt firmly convinced that if Bronstein had in fact examined this check beforehand, it would only have been highly superficially, in passing. By that time it was clear to me that I would have to capture the pawn on f6, but in whose favour was the opening of the long white diagonal? It could hardly be hoped that the rook at h1 would fall victim to Black's light-square bishop, but nevertheless the check on h4 was made!

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, I realise that my brain was so accustomed to The Variation, and I believed so sincerely, one might even say religiously, in its viability, that at the board I managed to discover a path along which dangers and pitfalls threatened not only Black, but also White.

Our game continued as follows:

13 g3 ♕xf6 14 ♕e4

Here it was Bronstein's turn to think at length over his move, but it nevertheless proved to be a poor one, and Black, after completely neutralising White's pressure, gained a slight advantage.

14...♖a7 15 ♖f1 ♕g6!

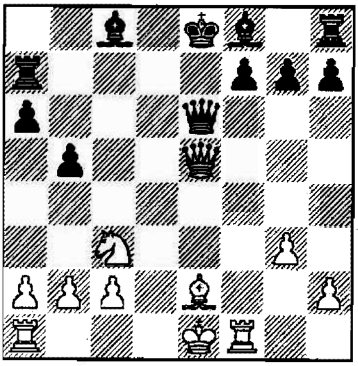
The beginning of a tactical operation, on which Black's whole defence is founded. White assumed that forcing the black rook off the back rank would enable him to create serious threats, but in reply to **16 ♕f4 ♘d7 17 ♘c6** there followed **17...e5!**

And suddenly the harmony became apparent among the black pieces (even those as widely-separated as the queen at g6 and the rook at a7), fulfilling a single common aim: control over the centre and the defence of their king.

Incidentally, it is on this harmony of Black's pieces, which gradually emerges as if on a photographic print, and on their amazing co-ordination, that the entire Variation as a whole is based.

18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♕xe5+ ♕e6

Now White has nothing better than to exchange queens, since 20 ♕b8 would be answered by 20...♗c5, then 21...0-0, and the white queen would soon feel like a fish out of water.



20 ♕xe6+ ♗xe6 21 0-0-0 ♗e7 22 ♘d5 ♗g5+ 23 ♔b1 0-0 24 h4 ♗d8 25 ♘f4 ♗c8, and the black bishops, although they have retreated onto the back rank, will sooner or later make their presence felt. There is no disputing Black's persistent, although minimal advantage.

26 ♗f3 g6 27 ♗d5

Simultaneously with this move Bronstein offered a draw, which, to the surprise of the spectators and the other competitors, was accepted. Of course, Black can play for the set-up ...♔g7, ...♗f5, ...♗c7-b8 and ...♖c8, which would give him the initiative. But, firstly, I had used up a tremendous amount of effort on the opening stage of the game, and secondly, the maximum possible satisfaction (creative, not competitive) from the game had already been obtained. After all, my 'brainchild' had survived yet another test!

After the game, David Ionovich was quite seriously upset. And this was not surprising, because he had caught his opponent in a prepared variation, but had failed to win the game, and in addition had used up his innovation! 'I trusted Muchnik,' Bronstein grieved, 'but 12 ♕d3 doesn't win!'

About my happiness at that moment I have already spoken, but gradually, on the way to the hotel, it began to be replaced by uneasiness. The night was spent at the chess board: had 12 ♕d3 been refuted, or was this move in fact the refutation of The Variation? Or perhaps neither the one nor the other? It is true that, instead of 14 ♕e4, Bronstein could have made the move which at the board I was most afraid of – 14 ♖f1. Then on 14...♕g6 White has the reply 15 ♕f3, and none of the variations that I examined was acceptable for Black.

I had to switch to the alternative queen move – 14...♕e5. On 15 0-0-0 Black now has 15...♗c5, and whatever White plays, for instance 16 ♘dxb5 or 16 ♘xe6, Black has an intermediate check with his queen at e3.

And I calmed down.

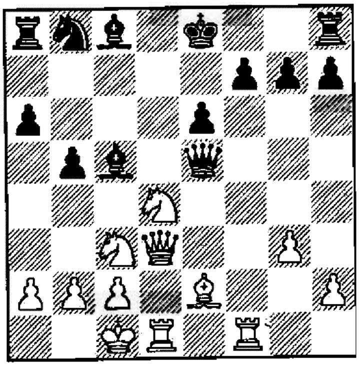
But then, roughly a day later, after the following round, I again began to have doubts. All the time Black was balancing on the very edge of the abyss. It only required the white king to stand slightly to one side – at b1, and Black could resign. Or if White were to find some intermediate move, catastrophe would be inevitable. A presentiment of danger in this position tormented me, and would not leave me in peace. On the one hand everything seemed all right, but on the other...

In this way some six months went by. The time came for me to prepare for a new USSR Championship, the second in that year. Together with Mikhail Yudovich (junior) I analysed several times the continuation 12 ♕d3, did not find anything for Black to be afraid of, and at that set off for Baku...

MEMORANDUM FROM MOSCOW

Literally only a couple of rounds had passed, and, after the November slush of their home towns, the competitors in the Championship had not yet had time to become accustomed to the warmth of the Caspian Sea, when I received a note from

Moscow from Mikhail Yudovich. After a few warm words of introduction, dictated by sympathy, it was shown in an extremely accurate and scrupulous analysis that in the above variation after 15...♗c5 White wins by force! And although, apart from us two, no one then knew about this, it is not at all difficult to imagine my feelings at that moment.



Yudovich, it turned out, had found that after 16 ♘xe6 ♕e3+ White replies 17 ♖d2!!, when Black is lost. On 17...♕xd3 there follows 18 ♘c7+ ♔d8 19 ♖xd3+ ♔xc7 20 ♖xf7+, and both after 20...♔b6 21 b4! ♗xb4 22 ♘d5+ ♔a5 (also bad is 22...♔c5 23 ♘xb4 ♔xb4 24 ♗f3, with a big material advantage) 23 ♖ff3!, with the threat of mate on a3, and after 20...♘d7 21 ♗g4 ♖d8 22 ♘e4! ♗f8 23 ♘g5, Black cannot save the game.

All this is also possible with the white king at b1, i.e. in the event of 17 ♔b1, and not 17 ♖d2. But in the variation 20...♗d7 21 ♗g4 ♖f8 the strength of White's 17th move is disclosed. He can play simply 22 ♖xg7, without having to worry about back-rank checks – 22...♖f1+ 23 ♔d2. If the white king were at b1, after the forced 23 ♘d1 ♗d6! Black would beat off the attack, while maintaining his material advantage. But here 23...♗d6 fails to 24 ♘e4!

If on the other hand Black plays 21...♖d8, then White attacks in similar fashion to that given above: 22 ♘e4 ♗f8 (on 22...♗b6 White has the calm reply 23 ♖xg7, and how Black can free himself is not apparent) 23 ♘g5.

I tested and retested most painstakingly the analysis in my friend's letter, and realised that The Variation had been floored. The move 15...♗c5 wasn't playable, and this meant that Black had once again to seek an answer to Hamlet's eternal question: 'To be or not to be?' I must admit that, at the start of the 1961 USSR Championship in Baku, I was certainly no happier as a result of this.

I repeat: no one knew about this, and for the time being I had to battle against an unseen opponent. But imminent questions do not hover about for long, and the opponent could at any time become a quite specific person. And besides, in general I did not have the moral right to adopt The Variation, relying merely on my opponent's possible ignorance. What was needed, indeed essential, was spiritual confidence, but this could be generated only out of a host of variations on the board.

Fate granted me something of a postponement. In the Championship only once did I have to uphold The Variation, against that brilliant tactician Rashid Nezhmetdinov, but there it was a quite different line that was tested.

But after the tournament I had ample time for analysis. Once more – for the umpteenth time! – I began studying the position after 12 ♕d3. I worked through – in great detail – Black's various replies. In the end I chose what seemed to be the least evil, and settled on 12...♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕xf6 14 ♖f1 ♕e5 15 0-0-0 ♖a7, although Black's position after 16 ♘f3 did not greatly impress me. The account of this analysis will be given a little later, but now I wish to confess that it was after this enormous amount of work, that I began to be seized more and more with a feeling of apathy towards The Variation.

The point was that, apart from the highly unpleasant Bronstein-Muchnik move 12 ♛d3, misfortune had also stolen up on The Variation from another side. Grandmaster Vladimir Simagin, a highly original and non-routine thinker, proposed two moves earlier the highly interesting 10 ♛e2!?, with the idea of maintaining the outpost at e5, quickly castling queenside, and mounting an attack on the black king which is stuck in the centre.

To wage war on two fronts, to find a defence simultaneously against two, equally dangerous systems, was a task that at the time was beyond me. I was lacking both in energy, and in peace of mind. While working on one move, I could not avoid thinking that the labour might be in vain, since it was possible that a defence wouldn't be found against the other. And suddenly it began to appear to me that The Variation had contracted radiculitis: the pain would ease in one place, only to appear the following day in another. It was then that the idea came to me of abandoning The Variation...

'Enough! I'm tired of this eternal searching, of this constant anticipation of further unpleasant surprises! It's time to decide!'

After the USSR Championship in Baku, from inertia I played it again in two 1962 games, against Ortega in Cuba and against Nikitin in the Championship of the Burevestnik club, and that's all.

'My thanks to you, Variation. I don't condemn you for your betrayal, and I bid you farewell!'

And it was just as well that this happened! At that point, when disillusionment had overtaken me, The Variation was suddenly taken up by a number of players. It began to be met in every tournament of any rank, and to fill the pages of magazines and bulletins. The Variation had become fashionable!

On the one hand, such an unspoken general recognition flattered my self-esteem – after all, for three long years, essentially I alone had constantly upheld The Variation for Black. But on the other hand it provoked a mixture of feelings of offence and bewilderment. It would have been one thing to play The Variation earlier, when it consisted purely of blank pages, and when every game represented 'a venture into the unknown'. But now, when such difficult experiences had befallen Black...!

This was the reason for my bewilderment. The offence I felt was for The Variation, which one new player after another would play rather light-heartedly, without going carefully into the already published examples, comments and analyses, without taking the trouble to investigate this unusual opening scheme which did not yield to general assessments, and as a result would suffer one crushing defeat after another. Contrary to the voice of reason, I took each such defeat to be a personal failure, and my heart sank each time I saw in print a new 20-25 move game, with the laconic 'Black resigns' at the end.

Many a time the thought flashed through my mind: shouldn't I once again throw myself into the battle, and put literally all my efforts into rehabilitating The Variation, to 'cleaning up' its badly damaged reputation? But the strength was no longer there, and my impulsive decision to abandon The Variation was confirmed roughly as follows:

"Let Black go on suffering defeats, only not in 'my' Variation, but in someone else's. I have had enough!"

THE RETURN

And for many years I didn't 'touch' The Variation at all, either in analysis, or in practice. Even now I don't know whether I would ever have returned to it, had it not been for the conversation with Botvinnik given at the very beginning of this book. Having merely become firmly convinced that it was about The Variation that I would write, I began examining old games, both my own and other players', and started lingering over what were apparently thoroughly-studied positions, checking once again things which had been tested many times. And a miracle occurred: after an interval of ten years The Variation suddenly took on for me a new aspect, and appeared in a completely different light. A sensation, hidden in the depths of my emotional memory, was suddenly revived: what if... What if for me The Variation is not dead? If The Variation is alive?!

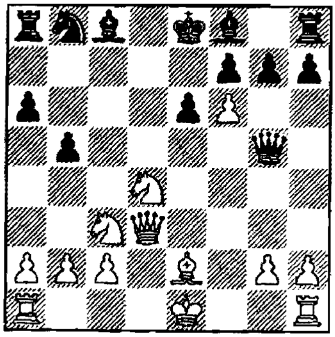
It was as if a dam had burst. To my relief, I began to discover that lines, of which formerly I had been so afraid, were in general perfectly feasible, and that far from the last word on them had been said. Feverishly, without a board, I worked from memory through the dozens of games that had been played in the intervening years... It appeared that the majority of them merely repeated what had gone before, or else were not of great importance. So that couldn't I search for this last word myself?!

My searching began in the first instance around the move 12 ♕d3. To be honest, to some extent I had to 'overcome' myself, and to pluck up courage, so as after an interval of so many years to begin stirring up the past, and try to solve the eternal dilemma: what to do?

Back in 1961, after the USSR Championship in Baku, I had attempted in the following position to play differently, and instead of 12...♕h4+ tried various other continuations.

(*see diagram next column*)

These were the possibilities that I checked at that time:



A. 12...♘d7?. This move is bad in view of the virtually forced 13 ♕f3 ♖a7 14 ♘e4 ♕e5 (no better is 14...♕d5 15 ♖d1 ♗b7 16 fxg7 ♗xg7 17 ♘f5!; both white knights are taboo in view of the check at d6, and in any case Black loses material) 15 ♘c6 ♕xb2 16 ♖d1 ♖c7 17 fxg7 ♕xg7 (not 17...♗xg7 18 ♘d6+, and mate next move) 18 ♖xd7! White exploits his lead in development by combinational means. Neither 18...♗xd7, nor 18...♖xd7, nor 18...♖xc6 is possible, on account of 19 ♘f6+, when Black has to give up his queen, while after 18...♔xd7 White has the decisive 19 ♘f6+ ♔d6 20 ♘e8+.

B. 12...gxf6?!. An interesting game Bobkov-Vitolinsh (USSR Championship Semi-Final, Riga 1962) continued: 13 ♘e4 ♕e5 14 0-0-0?!, and after 14...♗e7 15 ♘f3 ♕f4+ (gaining a very important tempo for the defence, and thereby succeeding in blocking the main avenue of attack – the d-file) 16 ♔b1 ♗b7 17 ♘c5 ♗d5 18 ♘b3 ♘c6 Black gradually repulsed the attack while keeping his extra pawn.

However, it was promptly established that, instead of castling queenside, at the cost of another pawn White could gain a probably irresistible attack: 14 ♘f3 ♕xb2 15 0-0! f5 (essential, so as to assure the queen of the square f6, from where it can take part in the defence, in particular of d8; on 15...♗e7, for instance, decisive is 16 a4!, with the terrible threats of 17 axb5 and 17 ♖fb1, trapping the queen) 16 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 17 ♕xd6 ♕f6 (if 17...♘d7, then 18 ♘d4, with numerous threats: 19 ♗f3, 19 ♘c6 and 19 ♘xe6), and after the continuation suggested by Boleslavsky, 18 a4 ♕e7 19 ♕g3, Black's position is unenviable: his king is forced to live out its days in the centre.

In a later game Matulovic-Ermenkov (Sombor 1972) White continued the attack differently, with 18 ♘d4, and on 18...♘d7 (if 18...♕e7, then, as shown by Velimirovic, 19 ♕e5 f6 20 ♗h5+ ♔f8 21 ♕e3 ♖g8 22 ♖ae1, and 23 ♘xf5, with a subsequent mate at e8, is very difficult to parry) he played 19 ♗f3 ♖a7 20 ♗c6, when White won easily, as there is no defence against the simultaneous threats of ♘xf5, ♖ad1 and ♕b8 etc.

C. 12...♖a7. At first I had some hopes of this move, but soon it had to be rejected. White continues 13 ♘e4 ♕e5 14 0-0-0 ♖d7 15 ♕c3.

15 ♕g3 ♕xg3 16 hxg3 ♗b7 has also occurred in practice; in the game Ribli-Szabo, Hungarian Championship 1967/8, White sacrificed a piece by 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♖xd7 ♔xd7!, but Black beat off the attack – 19 fxg7 ♗xg7 20 ♘c5+ ♔c6 21 ♖h5 ♔b6 22 ♘xe6 ♖e8, and went on to win. Also of great interest for Black is the idea employed by Fischer in a game with Minic, Skopje 1967: 15...gxf6 16 ♕xe5 fxe5 17 ♘f6+ ♔e7 18 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♘b3 ♗c6! 20 ♗f3 e4 21 ♗e2 ♘d7, and it is clear that Black's strong central pawns and two bishops are more than sufficient compensation for his slight material deficit. It is interesting to follow how, without any apparent effort, Black increases his advantage: 22 ♘a5 ♗a8 23 ♖hf1 f5 24 ♔b1 ♗h6 25 a4 bxa4 26 ♖d4 a3 27 ♖fd1 ♘f6, and the threat of ...f4-f3, plus the weakness of White's c2, make Black's position clearly preferable.

15...♗b7

15...♕xe4 is bad on account of 16 ♕xc8+ ♖d8 17 ♕xd8+! ♔xd8 18 ♘xe6+ ♔c8 19 ♖d8+ ♔b7 20 ♗f3 ♕xf3 21 gxf3 fxe6 22 f7, and White won easily (Prodanov-Ayansky, Bulgarian Championship 1965) while after 15...♕c7 16 ♘xb5 axb5 17 fxg7 ♕xc3 18 gxf8=♕+ ♔xf8 19 ♘xc3 Black is quite simply a pawn down with an inferior position (Turunen-Teirlinck, Groningen 1968/9).

16 ♘xb5

This thematic blow enables White to win a pawn; weaker is 16 ♗f3 gxf6 17 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18 ♗xb7 ♗h6+ 19 ♔b1 0-0, and Black is all right; he can also play 16...b4 17 ♕d3 gxf6 18 ♖he1 ♗e7 19 ♘g3 ♕f4+ 20 ♔b1 ♗xf3 21 gxf3 0-0, and after a complicated struggle the correspondence game Gora-Novak, Czechoslovakia 1973, ended in a draw.

16...♕xc3

The temptation to accept the 'Greek gift' and capture the 'Trojan horse' – 16...♕xe4, cost Black dearly in the game Browne-Osban, USA Open Championship 1971: 17 fxg7 ♖g8 18 ♘c7+ ♔d8 19 gxf8=♕+ ♖xf8 20 ♘xa6, and there is no arguing with White's three passed pawns, especially in view of the vulnerable position of the black king with heavy pieces on the board.

17 ♘bxc3 ♖xd1+ 18 ♖xd1 gxf6 19 ♘xf6+ ♔e7 20 ♘fe4 f5, and for the pawn (21 ♘c5 ♗xg2 22 ♘xa6) Black, in the opinion of Matsukevich, has some counterplay.

But, although it may seem strange, in my analysis of 12...♖a7 I paid little attention to these complicated variations, since it was obvious that after 12...♖a7 13 ♘e4 ♕e5 White could play much more simply – 14 0-0! (or 14 ♘f3 immediately), and in the event of 14...♖d7 15 ♘f3 ♕xb2 16 ♕e3 a position is reached with which we are already familiar (arising from the move order 12 0-0 ♖a7 13 ♕d3 ♖d7 14 ♘e4 ♕e5 15 ♘f6), and which I considered completely unacceptable for Black. It was for this reason, that the position arises literally after only 2-3 moves, and that Black cannot avoid it, that there was simply no point in making a detailed analysis of 12...♖a7.

Thus the range of possibilities had been markedly reduced. A natural and apparently logical continuation suggested itself:

D. 12...♗b7. It should be mentioned that I had analysed this bishop move very thoroughly ten years earlier. However, this analysis did not see the light of day, and all this time lay neatly written in a notebook. The point was that then, after the 1961 Soviet Championship, I had given a categorical verdict on the bishop move: it's no good! And I must admit that I was pretty astonished when, first in a monograph by Anatoly Matsukevich, and then in one by Isaac Boleslavsky published in East Germany, I saw that they had given the move 12...♗b7 a positive assessment. They based their opinion on the following variations:

13 ♗f3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♖a7 15 ♘e4 ♕e5 16 0-0-0 ♖d7 17 ♖hf1 g6! (but not 17...♖xd4 18 fxg7 ♖xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♕xg7 20 ♘f6+ ♔e7 21 ♖f1! ♔d8 22 ♕b7 ♗d6 23 ♖d1 ♕xf6 24 ♕xb8+ ♔e7 25 ♕xd6+ ♔e8 26 ♕xa6, and White wins; if on his 18th move Black tries 18...♗xg7, then 19 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 20 c3 ♕d7 21 ♕g3 – attacking two pieces – 21...f5 22 ♘c5 ♕a7 23 ♘xe6, with a swiftly decisive attack), and they consider that White has no advantage, despite the strong pawn at f6, which has penetrated into the black position like a wedge. There can follow, according to Boleslavsky, 18 c3 ♗h6+ 19 ♔b1 0-0 20 g4 ♖fd8 21 h4 b4, with a double-edged game.

All this looks convincing enough, but nevertheless a whole series of questions arise on the way. Why should White play 17 ♖hf1, which is not altogether logical in this position, since to develop his king's bishop Black will all the same play ...g7-g6, when White's rook at f1 will be rather stupidly blocked by his own pawn at f6? Instead of this, White has several other ways of maintaining his initiative.

For instance, 17 c3, or even better, 17 ♘b3. All the same Black has nothing better than 17...g6, but then comes 18 ♔b1, and White retains all the advantages of his position: he has control of c5, and on 18...♗h6 there can follow 19 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 20 ♖d1, when White's position is highly menacing. But these are minor problems.

The real trouble is that several moves earlier, after 12...♗b7 13 ♗f3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♖a7, White has an obvious move, not mentioned by the theorists: 15 ♘c6!, when with a clear conscience Black can already resign. Thus on 15...♖b7 (with the idea after 16 ♘xb8 of playing not 16...♖xb8 17 ♕c6+, but 16...♕e5+) White replies 16 ♖d1! (however, 16 ♘e4 is also sufficient) 16...♘d7 (there is nothing else) 17 ♘e4 ♕g6 (18 fxg7 was threatened, and therefore Black must defend g7, so as not to 'overload' his bishop, which is occupied with guarding d6) 18 fxg7 ♕xg7 19 ♘f6+! ♕xf6 20 ♕xf6 and 21 ♖d8 mate. There remains 15...♘xc6 16 ♕xc6+ ♖d7 17 ♖d1 ♕e5+, but then 18 ♘e4! ♕c7 19 ♕xa6, and the win for White is merely a matter of time.

And so, this exhausted all the possibilities for Black that were in the slightest degree logical on his 12th move. All were unsatisfactory. And, willy-nilly applying to chess the saying 'All roads lead to Rome', I had to return to that game with Bronstein, in which the move 12 ♕d3 first saw the light of day. In the end it became clear that the idea of capturing the pawn on f6 with the queen was correct: this 'precocious infantryman' had already caused the black king too much trouble in combination with the attack on the d-file! But if the idea was correct, and the problem facing Black was nevertheless unsolved, it meant that the errors in the execution of this plan had to be found...

And, like an electrician searching for a fault in a circuit, I began testing section by section, move by move, in the play for both White and Black after 12...♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕xf6 14 ♖f1!

Now on 14...♕g6, as I have already remarked, very unpleasant for Black is 15 ♕f3 ♖a7 16 ♘c6, when on 16...♗b7 there follows 17 ♗d3, and if 17...♗xc6, then 18 ♕e3. Therefore I concentrated all my attention on 14...♕e5, and tried to find a defence against 15 0-0-0.

A number of moves were rejected straight away. Thus 15...♗e7 is refuted by 16 ♕f3, with an attack on the rook at a8 and the pawn at f7. For the same reason, neither the knight nor the bishop can be developed at d7, 15...♗b7 fails to the thematic sacrifice 16 ♘xe6! (but not 16 ♘dxb5? ♕g5+ 14 ♔b1 axb5), while 15...♗c5 is unfortunately ruled out by the analysis of Yudovich given above. There remained only 15...♖a7, avoiding the double attack after ♕f3, and securely defending f7.

At first I saw to my relief that here the troublesome pseudo-sacrifice 16 ♘xe6 becomes a real sacrifice, on account of 16...♖d7, and does not bring White any joy. On 16 ♘dxb5, Black has the following rather elegant defence: 16...♖d7 17 ♕c4 ♗c5! 18 ♘e4 ♗e3+ 19 ♔b1 ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 0-0, and if 21 ♘bd6, then 21...♗d7, and after completing his development, Black, thanks to his two bishops and open files on the queenside, can hope for more than a draw.

In the event of 16 ♘f3 I at first decided to content myself with 16...♕c7, and if 17 ♕d4, then 17...♘c6 18 ♕g4 h5! followed by 19...g6, holding the position. While on 17 ♘g5 (or 17 ♘e5) I planned 17...♗e7 18 ♘xf7 0-0, when Black at least is still alive!

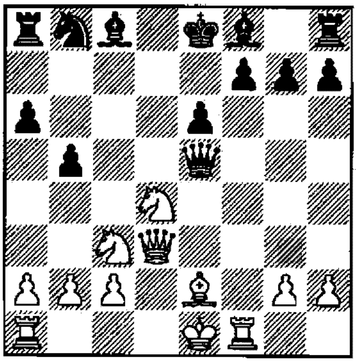
However, I was left with a certain feeling of dissatisfaction, and a little later, on closer examination, the situation suddenly clarified: one only has to continue this last variation for a few more moves, and Black begins to feel uncomfortable. For example, 19 ♘d6 ♖d8 20 ♘ce4 ♘c6 21 ♕f3 ♘e5 22 ♕e3, with a clear advantage. In this and similar lines White's superiority lies not in a dashing attack on the king, but in his solid positional pressure and in the complete disharmony among the black pieces, which in addition are very cramped. If after 19 ♘d6 Black should try to weaken White's pressure down the f-file by 19...♖xf1, then 20 ♗xf1, with a big positional advantage – 20...♗d7 21 ♗h3 ♘c6 22 ♕e3!

Thus, here too I was unable to find an equalising line.

Could it be that the circle had closed and there was no way out?

I should remind the reader that all this was analysed back in 1961-2. And then one memorable evening many years later, during my regular wanderings through the labyrinths of The Variation, it suddenly dawned on me: the pawn standing at g3 deprives the black queen of the valuable square f4! And in a game with that splendid tactician **Ljubomir Ljubojevic** in the 1973 international tournament in Hilversum, I now boldly went in for the entire Variation, being aware of the error found in the execution of the correct idea.

It turns out that after 12 ♕d3 one should not give an intermediate check at h4, but immediately capture the pawn – **12...♕xf6**. Then after **13 ♖f1** (White achieves nothing by 13 0-0-0 ♗e7! 14 ♖hf1 ♕h6+ 15 ♔b1 0-0 16 ♕g3 ♕g5! 17 ♕c7 ♕c5, or 17 ♕h3 ♖a7 18 ♘e4 ♕e5, or 17 ♕e1 ♖a7 18 ♘f3, Hector-Polugayevsky, Haninge 1990, and by 18...♕c5! 19 ♘e4 ♕c7 Black could have gained the advantage) **13...♕e5**



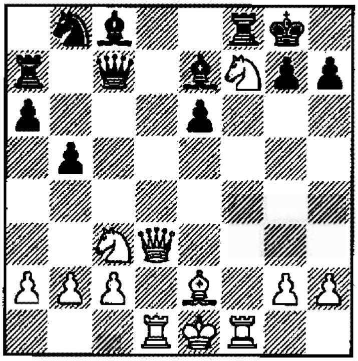
14 0-0-0 ♖a7 15 ♘f3 Black now has the intermediate 15...♕f4+ (that white pawn is at g2!) 16 ♔b1, and 16...♖d7, enabling him to escape from all his troubles!

Such is the unusual logic of chess. I am convinced that if the position after White's 12th move were shown to a beginner, he would without thinking play 12...♕xf6. Black in fact wins a pawn, and in doing so does not spoil his pawn formation! But for us to reach this truth, more than ten years, alas, was required!

Of course, at the board Ljubojevic foresaw the intermediate check at f4, and so instead of castling long he played **14 ♖d1.** This move is not without its dangers for Black, but I think it will be agreed that the fact that White's king has remained in the centre cannot help him in developing his initiative against his black opposite number.

(Alas, convincing though this assertion may seem, the future was to assign Ljubojevic's discovery an exceptionally important role in the fate of the entire Variation! – cf. p.106).

After **14...♖a7 15 ♘f3 ♕c7 16 ♘e5 ♗e7** (16...f5 fails to 17 ♗h5+ g6 18 ♘xg6 hxg6 19 ♗xg6+ ♔e7 20 ♕e3, and White wins, since 20...♔f6 is decisively met by 21 ♗xf5, Lipiridi-Sanakoyev, RSFSR Championship Semi-Final, Rostov-on-Don 1961, with the inclusion of the moves 12...♕h4+ 13 g3) **17 ♘xf7 0-0** the variations given above are no longer so strong.



White played **18 ♘d6**, and after **18... ♖xf1+ 19 ♔xf1 ♗d7 20 ♘ce4 ♘c6** Black was out of danger. The game continued **21 g3 ♘d8 22 c4 bxc4 23 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 24 ♗xc4 ♘f7**, when Black maintained the balance.

In a subsequent commentary on this game, Ljubojevic suggested for Black, instead of 17...0-0, the highly interesting possibility of 17...♕xh2!? (another reason why Black shouldn't give the queen check at h4 on move 12!). Now 18 ♘xh8 fails to 18... ♗h4+ 19 ♔d2 ♖d7, while on 18 g3 Ljubojevic recommends 18...0-0, and in the event of 19 ♕f3 (with the threat of 20 ♖h1) – 19...♗b7 20 ♕e3 ♖xf7!, when for the exchange Black obtains two pawns and the better position.

Here I must break to some extent the chronological order of my account.

The point is that, two years after our game, Ljubojevic once again had White against The Variation, this time in a game with Mecking in the tournament at Las Palmas. The Yugoslav chose the continuation 12 ♕d3, but in reply to 12...♕xf6 13 ♖f1 ♕e5 he unexpectedly played 14 0-0-0, from which he had refrained in the game with me.

There followed 14...♖a7 15 ♘f3 ♕f4+ 16 ♘d2 ♕e5, and White made a tacit offer of a draw – 17 ♘f3 ♕f4+ 18 ♘d2.

But Mecking decided to try for more, avoided the repetition of moves – 18...♕d6?! 19 ♕f3 ♕c6 20 ♘de4, and jauntily played 20...b4, thinking that he had seized the initiative. Later, to my question as to what he had been guided by, the young Brazilian grandmaster declared somewhat categorically:

'Oh, I always play only for a win!'

Ljubojevic responded with the very subtle 21 ♕f2!!, and it turned out that on 21...♖b7 or 21...♖c7 there follows 22 ♗h5!, characteristic of The Variation, with deadly threats. As the lesser evil Black chose 21...♖d7, although, naturally, he was unable to save the game: 22 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 23 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 24 ♘g5 ♔c7 25 ♗f3.

Ljubojevic conducts the attack in his customary manner. White does not require the f-file any more; his rook will continue its activity on the d-file.

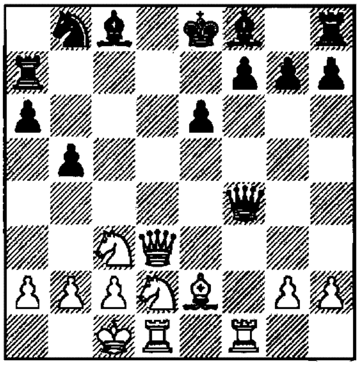
25...♕d6 26 ♘xe6+ ♔b6 27 ♖d1 bxc3.

Black has to part with his queen, since 27...♕b8 is adequately met by 28 ♘a4+, with mate in a few moves. However, in the game too Black does not resist for long.

28 ♖xd6+ ♗xd6 29 ♕xg7 ♗e5 30 ♕e7 cxb2+ 31 ♔b1 a5 32 ♘c5 ♘xc5 33 ♕xe5.

Further loss of material is inevitable, and Black resigned.

But of course, this encounter did nothing to refute the system of defence worked out by Black, and indirect evidence for this was provided by, among others, a game played by Ljubojevic two months after his meeting with Mecking. At the IBM Tournament in that same year, 1975, against Florian Gheorghiu the Yugoslav grandmaster chose this same system, but... this time with Black. The following position was again reached.



But here, without even offering a repetition of moves (16...♕e5), Ljubojevic introduced an innovation: 16...♕c7. This looks very dangerous for Black, since he blocks the path of his rook from a7 to d7. White naturally attempted to prevent his opponent from castling, and played 17 ♗h5, which was coolly answered by 17...g6. Not fearing the weakening of his dark squares, in particular f6, Black excludes the white bishop from the attack and prepares to castle, after which he will have everything in order.

18 ♕d4 e5!

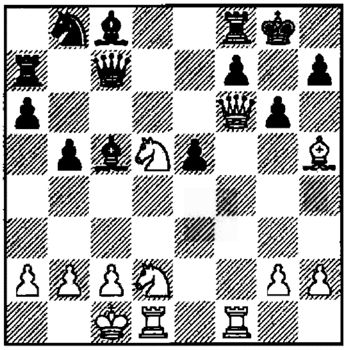
Although Black loses control over d5, his defence nevertheless holds, since his king escapes from the danger zone in the centre.

19 ♕f2.

19 ♕d3 ♗e6 was also possible (too dangerous is 19...gxh5 20 ♘d5 and 21 ♘f6+), but White plans an intrusion at f6.

19...♗c5 20 ♕f6 0-0 21 ♘d5.

Black appears to be in a bad way. On 21...♕d6 White gains an advantage by 22 ♘e4 ♕xf6 23 ♘dxf6+ ♔g7 24 ♘xc5 gxh5 25 ♘xh5+, for the same reason 21...♕c6 does not work, and all other queen moves are unsatisfactory. But, it turns out, Black's defence is held together by an elegant tactical resource, and it cannot be ruled out that this was found by Ljubojevic not at the board, but beforehand...



21...♗e7!!

Now after 22 ♘xc7 ♗xf6 Black has an extra pawn, even though it is doubled, while in the event of 22 ♕f2 the chasing of the white queen continues: 22...♗c5.

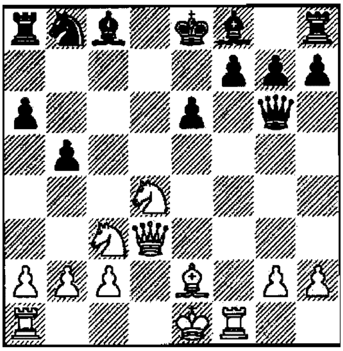
22 ♕f3 ♗b7! 23 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 24 ♕f2 ♗d5.

The picture has clarified: Black assumes the attack, in accordance with the classical canons of the Sicilian Defence in general, and of The Variation in particular. There is no salvation.

25 ♗f3 ♗xa2 26 ♘e4 ♖c7 27 ♕b6 ♖fc8 28 ♘f6+ ♕xf6, and White resigned.

It was thus that a defence appeared against the formidable Bronstein-Muchnik innovation 12 ♕d3. In my inspired state I again began believing in the viability of the entire Variation, and therefore I did not want to torment myself with thoughts about how long-lived the defence found would be. Could I at the time have fully anticipated what difficult tests awaited me in this line? (cf. p.106).

Earlier, in a game with **Milan Matulovic** (Belgrade 1974), I tried out an alternative method of defence, which formerly I had rejected: after **12 ♕d3 ♕xf6 13 ♖f1** I played **13...♕g6**, in order to test the continuation 14 ♕f3 ♖a7 15 ♘c6 ♗b7 16 ♗d3 ♗xc6 17 ♕e3 ♕h5 18 ♕xa7 ♗d6. And at once the Yugoslav grandmaster made a move that was completely new to me.



14 ♕e3!

It turned out that this variation, in which 14...♖a7 is not possible on account of 15 ♘xe6 ♖e7 16 ♘c7+, had been tried in some Yugoslav tournaments, but had not been noticed by the theorists, and therefore had not appeared in chess literature. At the board I was forced to solve some difficult problems.

14...♗c5 15 ♗f3 ♖a7 16 ♘e4 ♗b4+!

At first sight the idea of this check is not clear. The point is that Black, having decided to sacrifice the exchange, considered it useful to weaken the white king's future castled position, and also the d3 square. The direct attempt by Black to maintain material equality, and even his advantage of one pawn, 16...♖c7, would have allowed White to gain by simple means a considerable superiority: 17 ♕f4! ♗b6 (there is nothing else) 18 ♘d6+ ♔e7 19 ♖d1, and the storm clouds are beginning to gather over the black king, e.g. 19...♖d8 20 ♗h5! ♕f6 (20...♕xh5 21 ♘c6+) 21 ♕g3, and White wins.

In the game White continued **17 c3 ♗e7 18 ♘xe6** (if 18 ♘dxb5, then 18...♖d7, with a double-edged game) **18...♕xe6 19 ♕xa7 ♘c6** (gaining a further tempo for development, and planning in some cases to play the knight via e5 to d3) **20 ♕c7** (at the board I was afraid of 20 ♕a8, although it is true that here too Black has the move 20...f5; in general it must be said that, since both players were forced to improvise all the time, this game is of an obviously experimental character, and it raises a number of new questions, for the solving of which additional analysis and practical testing are required) **20...f5 21 0-0-0 fxe4 22 ♗h5+**.

Interesting, of course, was 22 ♖fe1, with the possible follow-up 22...♕h6+ 23 ♔b1 ♗f5! 24 ♗xe4 ♗xe4+ 25 ♖xe4 0-0 26 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 27 ♕xe7 ♕xh2, or 27...♕g6+ 28 ♔a1 ♕xg2, with a sharp endgame, that is nevertheless more favourable for White.

It is possible that, at the board, Matulovic did not care for 22...0-0 23 ♗xe4 ♗g5+ 24 ♔b1 ♘e7 25 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♖xe6 ♗xe6, and so therefore he forced a **draw: 22...g6 23 ♗g4 ♕xg4 24 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 25 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 26 ♕a8+ ♕d8 27 ♕c6+ ♕d7 28 ♕a8+**.

I have given this game, so as once again to emphasise the diversity of the methods of defence to which Black can resort.

I can merely again draw the readers' attention to the fact that, ten years after the initial analysis, the move 13...♕g6 seemed to me to have far from exhausted its resources.

ON THE RACK

Thus an antidote was found against the last and most dangerous method of attack associated with the capture on f6 – 10 exf6. But the reader may recall that an important part in my earlier decision to abandon The Variation was played by the move suggested by Vladimir Simagin – **10 ♕e2**. Or, to be more exact, not the move, but the entire system. By defending his e5 pawn, White gains time for castling on the queenside, and since his bishop at g5 survives, and together with the rook from d1 it will be aimed at the d8 square, White has the preconditions for an attack. His queen will later take its place at g4 or h5, and in combination with the threat of ♘xe6 the pressure on the black king's position will become highly intense. It will be seen that this scheme has a number of advantages over the alternative, formerly current, defence of the e-pawn – 10 ♘f3. There a piece was moved away from the centre, whereas here White achieves an optimal and highly rapid centralisation of his forces.

After 10 ♕e2, apart from 10...♘fd7, all other continuations, such as 10...♗b4 or 10...b4, have suffered a fiasco.

In the first case White gains a deadly attack: 10...♗b4 11 exf6 ♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 13 ♕d2 ♕xa1+ 14 ♔f2, and now 14...♗d7 (15 ♗xb5+, winning the queen, was threatened) 15 fxg7 ♖g8 16 ♕b4 (Mende-Pershonu, Rumania 1963), or 14...0-0 15 fxg7 ♖e8 16 ♗xb5 ♕xh1 17 ♗xe8, and Black is hopelessly behind in development. E.g. 17...e5 18 ♕b4 (threatening mate at f8) 18...♘d7 19 ♕e7, or 17... ♕xh2 18 ♕b4 ♔xg7 19 ♕e7 ♕h5 20 ♗f6+ ♔g8 21 ♗c6.

The second continuation, 10...b4?, is dubious because it does nothing to solve Black's development problems. By straightforward play White gains a strong attack: 11 ♘cb5 axb5 12 exf6. Now none of the following continuations is able to save Black:

A. 12...b3 13 ♘xb5 ♕a5+ 14 c3 gxf6 (if 14...♘d7, then 15 ♕f3 with the threat of 16 ♕xa8 and 17 ♘c7+) 15 ♗xf6 ♖g8 16 ♕c4, and wins (Estrin-Bukhtin, USSR 1968).

B. 12...h6 13 ♘xb5 ♕c6 14 ♕e5! hxg5 15 fxg7 ♗xg7 16 ♕xg7 ♖f8 17 0-0-0 ♘d7 18 ♘d6+ ♔d8 19 ♗b5, with a decisive offensive (Majstorovic-Little, corr. 1967).

C. 12...♖a5 13 ♘xb5 ♕b6 14 ♕e5! gxf6 15 ♗xf6 ♖g8 16 ♘c7+ ♔d7 17 ♖d1+ ♔c6

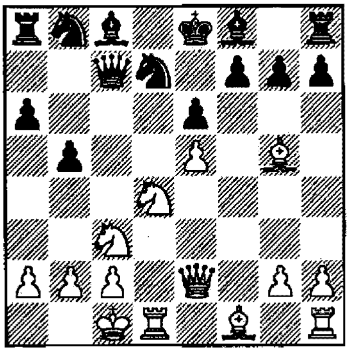
18 ♕e4+ ♖d5 19 ♘xd5, and White wins (Gordienko-Kulakov, Central Chess Club Championship Semi-Final, Moscow 1961).

D. 12...♗d7 13 ♕e4 (13 ♘xb5 is also very strong) 13...♕a5 14 b3 h6 15 ♗h4 g5 16 ♗g3 ♗c5 17 ♖d1 h5 (what else can one suggest for Black?!) 18 ♘xb5 ♔f8 (or 18...♗c6 19 ♕e5, if there is nothing better) 19 ♕b7, with a crushing attack (Musil-Antal, Yugoslavia- Hungary, 1962).

E. 12...♘d7, and now instead of 13 ♘xb5 ♕c5 14 ♗e3 ♕c6 15 ♕c4! (exchanging off the sole defender of Black's queenside – his queen) 15...♕xc4 16 ♗xc4 ♖b8 17 ♗a7 ♖b7 18 fxg7 ♗xg7 19 ♘d6+, winning (Kuprijanov-Jovcic, Yugoslav Championship 1962), White could have won even more quickly by 13 ♘xe6!, which immediately decides the game.

There was no need for us to quote all these games, which are devoted to second-rate, clearly defective variations. But it is remarkable how many players in different tournaments and at different times have tried to find a defence against Simagin's continuation! And this has all shown that to 10 ♕e2 there is only one reasonable reply – **10...♘fd7.**

11 0-0-0



We have reached the basic position analysed by Simagin. He considered that after 11...♗b7, which is Black's main continuation, by ♕g4 or ♕h5 and subsequent sacrifices on e6 or b5 White would gain a very strong attack, since it is rather difficult for Black to evacuate his king from the centre. Clearly, Black can play neither 11...♕xe5 12 ♕xe5 ♘xe5, because of 13 ♘dxb5, nor 11...♘xe5 on account of the same idea, only in more spectacular form – 12 ♘dxb5 axb5 13 ♕xe5, and the queen is taboo in view of mate by the rook at d8.

Apart from 11...♗b7, Black also has other, less important continuations, in particular 11...♗b4. This move occurred in the very first game played with the 10 ♕e2 variation, between Giterman and Stein (USSR Championship Semi-Final 1960). The future USSR Champion was clearly taken unawares by Simagin's move, for after the impromptu reply, 11...♗b4, Black stood badly. By the sacrifice of a pawn, White gained everything that he could have been dreaming of: 12 ♘e4!, and in every case the bishop at b4 remains out of play, while at the same time presenting a target for attack. The game developed as follows: 12...♕xe5 13 ♘f3 ♕c7 14 a3 ♗f8 (not from choice, but the bishop has no other square) 15 g4! ♗b7 16 ♗g2.

The two sides' forces have not yet come into direct contact, but White's lead in development is so great that the storm is likely to break at any moment. Anticipating this, Black offered the exchange of queens, but this did not weaken White's attack: 16...♕c4 17 ♕xc4 bxc4 18 ♘e5!, and it turned out that 18...♗e7 would now fail to 19 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 20 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 21 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 22 ♘c5+, winning two pieces for a rook, while on the plausible 18...f6, simply 19 ♘xc4 is highly unpleasant.

The attempt to block the X-ray action of the white rook on d8 by 18...♗d5 is similarly unsuccessful, since there follows 19 ♘xc4 (19 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 20 ♖he1, with the threat of mate in two moves, is insufficiently tempting, since by 20...♘b6 Black can hold on), and if 19...♗xc4, then 20 ♘d2!, reestablishing material equality and continuing the attack on the king – 20...♗d5 21 ♗xd5 exd5 22 ♖he1+ and 23 ♖xe7+.

On the other hand, after the game continuation, 18...c3 19 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 20 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 21 ♗xb7 ♗e7 (21...♖a7 22 ♗c6) 22 ♗f4, White not only maintained his positional advantage, but also won material.

Besides, after 11...♗b4, apart from the move made by Giterman, Black must also reckon, in my opinion, with the sharp and aggressive 12 ♘f5!? It has occurred only once in practice (Rozinatovsky-Yonshlescu, corr., Rumania 1966), and there Black succeeded in beating off the attack – 12... 0-0 13 ♘e7+ ♔h8 14 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 15 ♕e4 ♘c6 16 ♗d3 ♘f8 17 ♗f4 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 ♘g6 19 ♖de1 f5. But White could probably have played more strongly.

However, since the continuation 12 ♘e4 gives White a clear advantage, interest in the move 12 ♘f5 is really of a purely academic nature.

I also could not be satisfied with the dubious 11...b4?!, on account of 12 ♘e4 ♕xe5 13 ♘f3. Incidentally, this occurred in the game Ermenkov-Ajanski, Albena 1971, which continued 13...♕a5 (if 13...♕c7 14 g3) 14 ♕c4 ♗b7 15 ♖d6!, and one can only sympathise with Black's situation.

And now a short excursion into history. When, early in 1961, I first learned of Simagin's idea, I decided without due preparation that I would play 10 ♕e2 ♘fd7 11 0-0-0 ♘c6, since in the resulting position I considered one of Black's main enemies to be the white knight at d4.

But in the spring, I think it was in May, that brilliant teacher and analyst Grigory Ravinsky suggested, in reply to this, 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♕d3! (this is much stronger than my suggestion of 13 ♘e4 ♗b7 14 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 15 ♖xd6 ♕c7 followed by ...♘c5, depriving White's light-square bishop of the d3 square). White improves the position of his queen, and opens the way for his bishop at f1. After this, Black's position gradually ceased to appeal to me, and by the summer of the same year in the RSFSR Championship I had already decided on 11...♗b7.

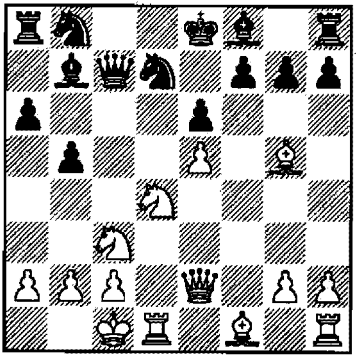
To return to Ravinsky's continuation, one of the moves tried was 13...♗c5, which allows White the possibility of attacking this bishop with his knight, and after 14 ♗e2 ♕c7 15 ♘e4 0-0 16 ♕g3! ♔h8 (forced, in view of the threat of 17 ♘f6+, which is also decisive after 16...♕xe5?, since 17...gxf6 18 ♗f4+ leads to the loss of the queen, and 17...♔h8 18 ♘xd7 to the loss of a piece) 17 ♗f4 ♗e7 18 ♘f6! ♕d8 (obviously the knight cannot be captured in any of the possible ways, since 19 exf6 threatens both mate at g7, and also the black queen) 19 ♗f3 ♖a7 20 ♗e3 White won the exchange in the game Tomson-Kovacevic (Lvov 1961).

Of course, 13...♗c5 is a poor move, as is 13...♗b4 (with the aim of castling quickly): 14 ♗e2 ♖b8 15 ♘e4 0-0 16 ♘f6+! ♘xf6 (or 16...gxf6 17 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 18 ♕g3+ ♔h8 19 exf6 ♖g8 20 ♖d8!, mating) 17 ♗xf6 ♗b7 18 ♕h3 gxf6 (18...♖fc8 19 ♗d3 g6 20 ♖he1) 19 ♖d4 with a decisive attack, but even analysis of what was in my opinion the best continuation, 13...♗b7 14 ♗e2 ♕c7, did not produce anything resembling equality, however much I searched. And this is not surprising! After all, Black's kingside is undeveloped, and his king is in the centre. White can, for instance, build up his heavy pieces on the d-file, and happily part with his e-pawn, which opens additional lines for the attack: 15 ♖d2 ♘xe5 16 ♕g3! ♗b4 17 ♗f4 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 f6 19 ♗xe5 fxe5 20 ♗h5+ g6 21 ♗xg6+ hxg6 22 ♕xg6+ ♕f7 23 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 24 ♖d7+. So that 11...♘c6 does not lead to a 'change of values'.

Hypnotised by Ravinsky's brilliant invention, I had no doubts about this evaluation. But fate was to decree otherwise: nearly two decades later my attention would again be drawn to 11...♘c6 (cf. p.100).

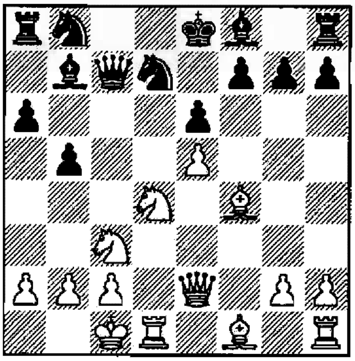
On one occasion Black also played 11...♗e7, which, to be honest, I had not analysed at that time, so hopelessly bad did it appear to me. Black did indeed suffer a swift and severe debacle: 12 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 13 ♕g4 ♕xe5 (or 13...♔f8 14 ♕xe6! ♘xe5 15 ♘d5!) 14 ♗xb5! (intending to answer 14...axb5 with 15 ♖he1 h5 16 ♕f3 ♕g5+ 17 ♔b1 ♖a7 18 ♘f5+ ♔f8 19 ♘d6 ♘b6 20 ♕f2, regaining the piece and winning the game) 14...♗b7 15 ♖he1 h5 16 ♘f5+ ♔d8 17 ♕h4+, and Black shortly resigned: 17...g5 (on 17...♕f6 White wins by 18 ♕xf6 gxf6 19 ♘d6 and 20 ♗xd7) 18 ♕xg5+ f6 19 ♗xd7 fxg5 20 ♗xe6+ (Kupper-Walther, Zurich 1961).

That was how, practically by the method of elimination, my choice came to fall on **11...♗b7**, although from the very start I regarded it with some scepticism. The combinational possibilities that White acquires (after 12 ♕g4) are too extensive, particularly in connection with the weakening of e6! And when between 1961 and 1962 I took the decision to part with The Variation, an important role in this was played by the position in the diagram.



At that time Simagin's idea was only just beginning to gain acceptance (it is true that it did this fairly rapidly and confidently), and therefore I had hardly any personal experience of playing this position. But a vast number of games were played on this theme, and they provided material for a rather surprising conclusion: it was too early to come to a conclusion! The position was so complicated that here too there was a whole wealth of possible work for chess players!

And so, it is White to make his 12th move. In the first game where Simagin's idea was employed against me, **Mikhail Yudovich** played a poor move – **12 ♗f4**.



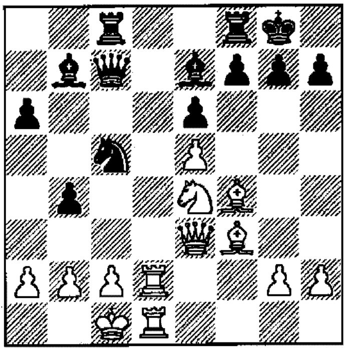
White has unexpectedly betrayed the basic demand of the position, which is to be prepared to make sacrifices in general, and of the e-pawn in particular, so as to attack, attack and attack. Black replied **12...♘c6**, when White has nothing better than **13 ♘xc6**, since the pressure on the e-pawn is becoming unpleasant, and by ...♗c5 Black plans to complete his development.

The game continued **13...♕xc6**, and in order to clear the way for his king's bishop, White was forced to waste a tempo: **14 ♕d3**. But now **14...♘c5 15 ♕e3** (in the event of 15 ♕g3 Black acquires the square e4 for his knight with gain of tempo by 15...b4) **15...♗e7 16 ♗e2 0-0** led to a position in which Black was fully mobilised and had seized the initiative; the white king is clearly less happily placed than his black opposite number. The overall idea of the Sicilian Defence – counter-attack on the queenside – has developed into an attack, and it is now White who must think in terms of defence.

17 ♗f3 ♕c7 18 ♖d2 ♖ac8 19 ♖hd1

White has seized the open d-file, but since there are no squares of intrusion on it, Black does not intend to contest it. His main avenue of attack is the c-file.

19...b4 20 ♘e4



20...♗xe4!

A crucial and correct decision. White is unable to utilise the advantage of the two bishops, while the knight at c5 is needed by Black to support his queenside pawn offensive, and also to defend the d7 square against the possible intrusion of the white rooks.

21 ♗xe4 a5 22 ♗f3 a4 23 ♔b1 ♕a5

The storm clouds are gathering over the white king. Black threatens both the breakthrough ...b4-b3, as well as the further concentration of his forces by ...♖c7 and ...♖fc8. It is already too late for White to think of a similar advance of his g- and h-pawns. Even so, he should have avoided the following move, which leads to an exchange of bishops.

24 ♗g5 ♗xg5 25 ♕xg5 b3 26 a3

Of course, on 26 cxb3 Black would not have replied 26...axb3 27 a3, when his attack is repulsed, but 26...♘xb3, and if 27 ♖d7 (27 axb3?? loses immediately to 27... axb3, when there is no defence against mate at a2) then 27...♘c5, with subsequent pressure now down the b-file.

26 ...bxc2+ 27 ♖xc2 ♘b3

The end draws close, since White loses control of the c-file, and with it the square c1.

28 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 29 ♗e4

Intending to post the bishop at c2, since the 'active' 29 ♕e7 loses instantly to the thematic 29...♕d2.

29...f6!

Driving the queen off the cl-h6 diagonal.

30 ♕h4 f5 31 ♗c2 ♘d2 + 32 ♔c1 ♘c4

Black has too many threats (against the e-pawn, the square b2, and the white king) for White to be able to parry them all.

33 ♕d4 ♕c7

Black has no intention of limiting himself to the capture of the e-pawn, and now threatens 34...♘xa3.

34 ♕d7 ♘e3

Black has calculated a lengthy, but straightforward variation, which wins by force.

35 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 36 ♖d2 ♖c5 37 ♔b1 ♘xc2 38 ♖xc2 ♖xe5 39 ♖c4 ♖e2 40 ♖xa4 ♖xg2

The point, of course, is not that Black has an extra pawn, but that the passed pawn at f5 plans to become a queen within four moves.

41 ♖c4 e5

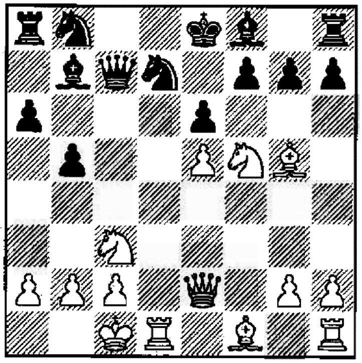
This move was sealed by Black. On the resumption White replied **42 ♖c5**, and after **42...♖e2 he resigned.**

Thus the passive move 12 ♗f4 suffered a fiasco.

Two other moves are also not especially terrible for Black: 12 ♘f5 and 12 ♘xe6.

Both have the immediate aim of destroying by combinational means the pawn cover of the black king in the centre.

12 ♘f5 is to some extent dangerous, but Black nevertheless succeeds in maintaining the balance.



12...exf5 (otherwise on 12...♘c6 White replies 13 ♘e4, with an intrusion on d6) 13 e6 ♘f6 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♕h5.

White's specific intention takes shape: to open the e-file, and, by the further sacrifice of his bishop on b5, to strike at the black king after ♖he1.

15...♗b4!

Without doubt the strongest. In the game Belokurov-Sanakoyev (Lipetsk 1962) Black played the weaker 15...♗g7?, and quickly came under a crushing attack: 16 ♗xb5+ axb5 17 exf7+ ♔f8 (if 17...♕xf7, then 18 ♖he1+ ♗e4 19 ♘xe4! ♕xh5 20 ♘g5+, and it is the position of the bishop at g7 that is Black's undoing, cutting off the escape of his king) 18 ♖he1 ♗e4 19 ♘xe4 ♘d7 20 ♘c5!, and Black resigned, since he cannot play 20...♘e5, covering the square e8 – 21 ♘e6+.

By 15...♗b4! Black prepares for castling, and White, so as not to lose the initiative, has to go in for further sacrifices.

16 ♗xb5+ (White cannot avoid this, since the immediate 16 exf7+ allowed Black in Pimonov-Kremenetsky, Moscow Championship Semi-Final 1969, to beat off the attack: 16...♔f8! 17 ♕h6+ ♔xf7 18 ♗e2 ♗xc3 19 ♗h5+ ♔e6 20 bxc3 ♗e4, and the black king is very comfortable in his fortress in the centre) 16...axb5 17 exf7+ ♔f8!

For rather a long time this was thought to be a losing move, this opinion being based on what was a virtually unique case of 'twin' games. In Boukal-Ptak (Czechoslovakia 1969) after 18 ♖he1 ♘a6 19 ♖e8+ ♔g7 20 ♕xf5 ♕xf7 21 ♕g4+! ♕g6 (after 21...♔h6 22 ♖e3, mate or loss of the queen is inevitable) 22 ♖d7+ ♔h6 23 ♕h4+ ♕h5 the players agreed a draw, assuming that White had nothing more than perpetual check.

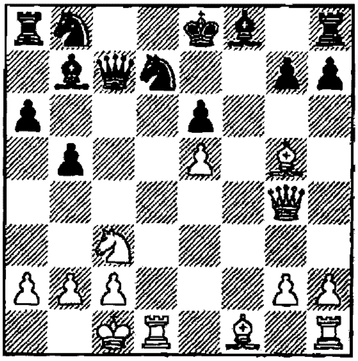
But a year later in the game Gubolini-Palmiotto (Italian Championship 1970) in this position White announced mate in three moves: 24 ♕xf6+ ♕g6 25 ♕h4+ ♕h5 26 ♖e6 mate.

Therefore, instead of 17...♔f8, the theorists recommended 17...♕xf7, which, according to analysis by Belokurov, leads to perpetual check after 18 ♖d8+ ♔e7 19 ♖e1+ ♗e4 20 ♘d5+ ♔e6 21 ♘f4+. True, if on the previous move Black had played 20...♕xd5!, then after 21 ♖xd5 ♗xe1 it would be White, not Black, who would have had to think in terms of saving the game. Therefore, Belokurov's analysis is correct only with the following transposition of moves: first 20 ♖xe4+ fxe4, and only now 21 ♘d5+ ♔e6 22 ♘f4+, with a draw.

If 22 ♕h3+, then 22...f5! 23 ♕h6+ ♔e5 24 ♕f4+ ♔e6, as occurred in a game from a clock simultaneous, Psakhis-Polugayevsky, USSR 1976, and now after 25 ♘c7+, instead of the faulty 25...♔e7? 26 ♕g5+ ♕f6 27 ♘d5+, correct was 25...♕xc7! 26 ♕xc7 ♖xd8 27 ♕xd8 ♗d6 28 ♕e8+ ♔f6 29 ♕xb5 ♖xa2, when Black, with rook and two minor pieces for the queen plus his passed e-pawn, retains sufficient counter-chances.

Later, however, Boleslavsky established that it was not 17...♔f8 that was wrong, but the move following it in reply to 18 ♖he1 – 18...♘a6? After the superior 18...♘d7! White's attack is insufficient, e.g. 19 ♕xf5 ♘e5 20 ♕xf6 ♘xf7, or 19 ♖e8+ ♔g7 20 ♕xf5 ♘e5 21 ♘xb5 ♕xf7 22 ♖xe5 ♗c8! 23 ♕e4 fxe5 24 ♕xa8 ♗g4, or 19 ♕h6+ ♔xf7.

The other 'violent' possibility – **12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 ♕g4** – can also be repulsed by Black, but not without some difficulty.



True, the poor move 13...♕b6 leads to a forced loss: 14 ♖d6! ♗xd6 15 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 16 ♗c4! bxc4 17 ♖f1+ ♘f6 18 ♖xf6+ gxf6 19 ♗h6 mate, and also bad is 13...♕c6? 14 ♖d6! ♗xd6 15 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 16 ♗xb5, or 13...♔f7? 14 ♗xb5 axb5 15 ♖hf1+ ♘f6 16 ♗xf6 ♔g8 17 ♗xg7.

Black also has other ways of losing. Thus Boleslavsky and Matsukevich, who have devoted much analysis to this variation, consider three further instances in which White gains an irresistible attack. Here they are:

A. 13...♘xe5 14 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 15 ♗xb5+ ♔f8 16 ♖hf1+ ♗f3 17 ♖xf3+ ♘xf3 18 ♗xe7+ ♕xe7 19 ♕f5+ ♕f6 20 ♖d8+, winning.

B. 13...♘c6 14 ♕xe6+ ♘e7 (if 14...♗e7 15 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 16 ♗xb5 axb5 17 ♘xb5 ♕c6 18 ♘d6+ ♔d8 19 ♘xb7+ ♕xb7 20 ♖xd7+ ♕xd7 21 ♖d1, and the queenside pawn phalanx inevitably advances; 15 ♘e4, establishing the knight at d6, also looks very attractive) 15 ♗xb5 axb5 16 ♘xb5 ♕c6 17 ♘d6+ ♔d8 18 ♘xb7+ ♕xb7 19 ♖xd7+ ♕xd7 20 ♖d1, and White wins. E.g. 20...♖a7 21 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 22 ♕b6+ ♖c7 23 ♕b8+ ♖c8 24 ♕d6+ ♔e8 25 e6 ♖d8 26 ♕f4 ♖a8 27 ♕d4; no better is 20...♕xd1+ 21 ♔xd1 ♖c8 22 ♕b6+ ♔e8 23 e6 h6 24 ♕b5+ ♘c6 25 ♕b7, with similar effect.

C. 13...♘c5 14 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 15 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 16 b4 ♘cd7 17 a3 ♘c6 18 ♕xe6 ♘cxe5 19 ♗e2 (possibly even stronger is 19 ♗xb5 axb5 20 ♖d1 ♖xa3 21 ♕xe5 ♖a1+ 22 ♘b1 ♖a8 23 ♕xb5, with a decisive attack) 19...♖c8 20 ♖d1 ♖xc3 21 ♕xe5 ♖c7 22 ♗g4, and although Black has kept his material advantage, his king is badly placed, and White's chances are markedly preferable.

However, instead of 17...♘c6 Black has a stronger reply: 17...g6, and after 18 ♕xe6 ♗g7 his pieces become very active. 17 a3 looks rather slow, and for this reason the path chosen by White in the game Winslow-Browne (USA 1976) is much more dangerous for Black: 17 ♗e2!? h5 (17...♘c6 18 ♖d1 ♘cxe5 19 ♕xe6 ♔c7 20 ♗xb5 axb5 21 ♘xb5+ ♔b8 22 ♖xd7, or 17...g6 18 ♖d1 ♗g7 19 ♕xe6 ♖e8 20 ♕b6+ ♔c8 21 ♗g4 ♖e7 22 ♕d6 ♔d8 23 e6 ♗xc3 24 ♕b6+) 18 ♕xe6 ♗xb4 19 ♕b3 ♗xc3 20 ♕xc3 ♖e8 21 ♖d1 ♘bc6 22 ♗xh5 ♖xe5 23 ♗f3 (Winslow considers that 23 ♗g4 ♖e7 24 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 25 ♕xg7 also gives good winning chances) 23...♖e6 24 ♕xg7 ♖e7, and now, in Shamkovich's opinion, 25 ♕g5 ♖c8 26 ♖d6! gives White a decisive advantage.

The discussion did not end there. Instead of 17...h5 Kavalek suggested 17...♗e7 18 ♕xg7 (if 18 ♕xe6 ♗g5+ and then 19...♖e8, but 18 a3 is interesting, maintaining both threats, 19 ♕xe6 and 19 ♕xg7) 18...♖f8!, and if 19 ♖d1 (19 a3 ♘c6 20 ♖d1 ♔c7) 19...♗xb4 20 ♗g4 ♖e8, or 19 ♗g4 ♗xb4 20 ♗xe6 ♖e8!, when the chances are not easy to evaluate. Thus there is still much that is unclear in the move 13...♘c5, although it is hard to believe in a successful outcome for Black.

But Black has at his disposal a possibility of repelling his opponent's menacing offensive: **13...♕xe5**.

14 ♗d3.

The strongest. In the event of 14 ♗xb5 axb5 15 ♖he1 there follows a counterblow typical of positions in this plan: 15...h5! 16 ♕h4 ♕c5! 17 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 18 ♖de1 ♕f5 19 g4 ♕xg4 20 ♕f2+ ♔g8 21 ♗e7 ♘c6, and Black wins (A. Zaitsev-Byelov, RSFSR Championship 1960). In this line 16...♕c7 is weaker in view of 17 ♘xb5 ♕c5 18 ♕f4!, but not 17 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 18 ♘xb5 ♕c5.

14...♗e7 (inadequate is 14...♘f6 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♔b1 ♔f7 17 ♖he1 ♖g8 18 ♕h3 ♗xg2 19 ♕xh7+ ♖g7 20 ♗g6+ ♔e7 21 ♕h4, and wins – analysis by Browne) **15 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 16 ♖he1 h5!?**

On 16...♕f6 White has several possible replies:

A. Winslow examines 17 ♕b4+ ♔d8 18 ♗e4 ♗xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♕f4+ 20 ♔b1 ♖a7 21 ♕d4 ♖c7 22 ♕xg7 ♕f8 23 ♕xf8+ ♖xf8 24 ♘g5, or 21...♘c6 22 ♕xg7 ♕f8 23 ♕c3! ♔c7 24 ♘g5 with the better prospects for White. In this variation Black also fails to equalise by 18...♕f4+ 19 ♔b1 ♖e8 20 ♖f1 ♕c7 21 ♖f7 ♖a7 22 ♕d4 ♗xe4 23 ♘xe4 ♘c6 24 ♕xg7 ♘ce5 25 ♖f8, Fernandez-Rodriguez, Mexico 1977. But Black's actions in Winslow's line can be improved: 18...♖a7!? 19 ♗xb7 (19 ♕d6 ♔c8, or 19 ♕c5 ♗xe4 20 ♕xa7 ♕f4+ 21 ♔b1 ♗f5, or 19 ♔b1 ♔c8 20 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 21 a4 ♔a8 with an unclear position) 19...♖xb7 20 ♘e4 ♕f4+ 21 ♔b1 ♖b6!, when his defences hold (analysis by van der Vliet).

B. Shamkovich suggests 17 ♔b1 ♘e5 18 ♕b4+ ♔e8 19 ♘e4 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♖a7 21 ♕d6 ♘bd7 22 ♗c6, or 17...♘c5 18 ♕b4 ♘bd7 19 ♗e4, and recommends as the best defence for Black 17...♖c8!, and if 18 ♕b4+, then 18...♖c5 19 ♗e4 a5.

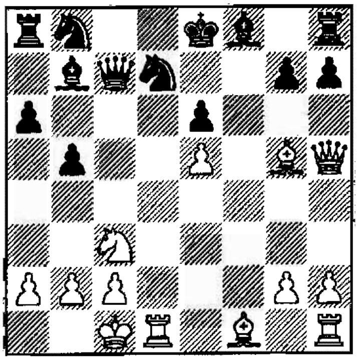
C. Serious consideration should also be given to 17 ♗f5!? ♘e5 (17...♘c5 18 ♗xe6!) 18 ♕d4 (18 ♕b4+ ♔f7 19 ♘e4 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♕g5+ 21 ♔b1 ♘bd7) 18...♘bd7 19 ♕d6+ ♔f7 20 ♕c7 ♖ad8 21 ♗h3 with a powerful initiative. Of course, without a thorough checking, it is hard to give a definitive evaluation of 17 ♗f5.

D. In my opinion, the most forceful move for White is 17 ♗e4, when Boleslavsky's recommendation of 17...♘c6 is met by the quiet 18 ♕g3! creating irresistible threats. Black should play 17...♗xe4 18 ♘xe4 (18 ♕xe4 also looks good) 18...♕h6+ 19 ♘g5 e5 20 ♔b1 ♖a7. White can continue the attack by 21 ♕b4+ ♔e8 22 ♘e4, when although no direct win is apparent, Black's position hangs by a thread.

17 ♕b4+ ♕c5 18 ♕h4+ ♘f6! (the only way; in the event of 18...g5 19 ♕h3, or 19 ♕g3 ♖f8 20 ♗e4 ♘c6 21 ♘d5+, Veselovsky-Gorelov, USSR 1980, White's initiative is very dangerous) **19 ♕g3** (White does not obtain any real chances after 19 ♕h3 ♘bd7 20 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 21 ♗g6 ♕g5+ 22 ♔b1 ♕xg6 23 ♖xd7 ♗xg2) **19...♖g8 20 ♖e5 ♕b6 21 ♗f5 ♘bd7 22 ♖xe6+ ♕xe6 23 ♗xe6 ♔xe6 24 ♕d6+ ♔f7 25 ♕c7 ♗c8 26 ♘d5 ♘xd5 27 ♖xd5 ♖e8 28 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 29 ♕xd7+ ♔g6**, with a draw, Olafsson-Polugayevsky, Reykjavik 1978.

It appeared that after this the curtain could have been rung down, when suddenly and unexpectedly the Moscow master Lepyoshkin almost theatrically declared in an article (1979) that 12 ♘xe6! won by force, and as evidence gave the following detailed variations.

12...fxe6 13 ♕h5+



This check is the point of the idea found by Lepyoshkin.

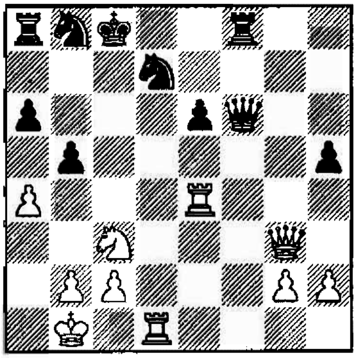
13...g6 14 ♕g4 ♕xe5

The tactical operation 14...♗e7 15 ♗xe7 ♘xe5 (if 15...♔xe7 16 ♕h4+! ♔e8 17 ♗xb5 and then 18 ♖d6 with a powerful attack) is interesting. But after 16 ♕g3 ♕xe7 17 ♕xe5 0-0 18 ♖d6, or 18 ♗d3, White has a solid advantage. Equally unsatisfactory is 16...♔xe7 17 ♗xb5 axb5 18 ♕h4+ ♔f8 19 ♖hf1+ ♔g7 20 ♕f6+ ♔h6 21 ♖d4, or 18...♔e8 19 ♘xb5 ♕e7 20 ♘d6+. Also after the strongest reply 17...♖c8 (Liberzon-Ljubojevic, Buenos Aires 1979) 18 ♕h4+ ♔f8 19 ♕f6+ ♔g8 (19...♘f7 20 ♖hf1 axb5 21 ♕h8+ ♔e7 22 ♕g7 ♖f8 23 ♘xb5 followed by 24 ♕f6+) 20 ♕xe6+ ♔g7, by continuing 21 ♗a4! White would have created serious threats.

15 ♗d3

Here Lepyoshkin considers two options.

A. 15...♗e7 16 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 17 ♖he1 h5 (other continuations are weaker: 17...♘f6 18 ♕b4+ ♕d6 19 ♖xe6+ ♔xe6 20 ♗f5+ gxf5 21 ♕xd6+, or 17...♕f6 18 ♗e4 ♗xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♕g5+ 20 ♔b1 ♖a7 21 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 22 ♕b6+ ♖c7 23 ♕xb8+, or 17...♕c7 18 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 19 ♗xb5) 18 ♕xg6 ♕f6 19 ♕g3 ♖f8 (19...♔d8 20 ♗e4!) 20 ♗e4 ♗xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♔d8 (Black has to defend against the threats of 22 ♘d5+ and 22 ♕c7) 22 a4 ♔c8 23 ♔b1.

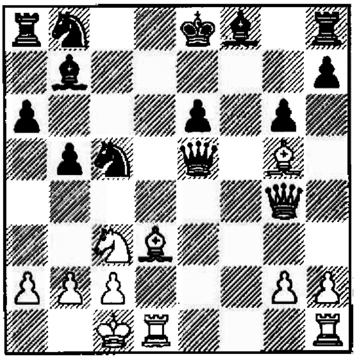


23...♘c5 24 axb5! ♘bd7 (bad is 24...♘xe4 25 ♘xe4 ♕f4 26 ♕c3+ ♔b7 27 ♕g7+ ♔b6 28 ♖d6+, or 26...♕c7 27 ♘d6+ ♔d7 28 ♘e8+) 25 ♖c4 axb5 26 ♘xb5, with a powerful attack.

B. The alternative: 15...♘c5.

Now 16 ♖he1 achieves nothing after 16...♘xd3+ 17 cxd3 ♕f5 18 ♖xe6+ ♔d7! Similarly unsuccessful is 16 ♗xg6+ hxg6 17 ♖d8+ ♔f7 18 ♖f1+ ♔g7 19 ♗f6+ ♕xf6 20 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 21 ♕f4+ ♔e7 22 ♕d6+ ♔f7 23 ♕c7+ ♔f6 24 ♕f4+, and White is obliged to force a draw.

After 15...♘c5 Lepyoshkin analyses three basic continuations:

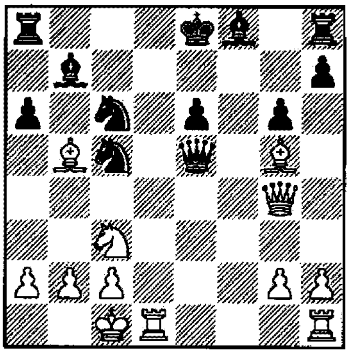


B(i). 16 ♖hf1 ♗e7 (after 16...♘bd7 White's initiative develops unhindered: 17 ♖de1 ♕d6 18 ♗xb5! ♗g7 19 b4! axb5 20 ♘xb5 ♕b6 21 ♘c7+! ♕xc7 22 ♖xe6+

♘xe6 23 ♕xe6 mate, or 18...axb5 19 ♘xb5 ♕c6 20 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 21 ♖xe6+, or 18...♗c6 19 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 20 ♕f4) 17 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 18 ♖fe1 ♘xd3+ 19 cxd3 ♕d6! 20 ♕g5+ (20 d4 ♗d5!) 20...♔f7 21 ♖f1+ ♔e8, and Black beats off the attack.

B(ii). 16 ♗xb5+!? ♘c6!

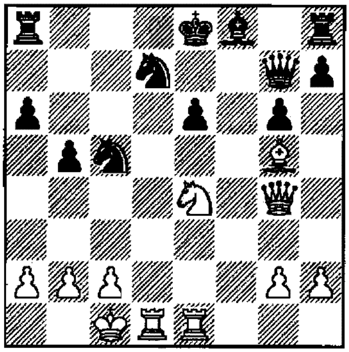
Weaker is 16...♔f7 (16...axb5 17 ♖d8+ ♔f7 18 ♖f1+ ♔g7 19 ♕h4, or 16...♘bd7 17 ♖he1 ♕f5 18 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 19 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 20 ♕c4, and wins) 17 ♖d8 ♘bd7 (17...axb5 18 ♖f1+ ♔g7 19 ♕h4) 18 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 19 ♖f1+ ♔e8 (19...♔g7 20 ♗xd7, and White maintains very strong pressure) 20 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 21 ♖f7+ ♔c8 22 ♕c4+ ♔b8 (22...♕c5 loses immediately to 23 ♖xf8+) 23 ♗f4 ♗h6 24 ♗xh6 ♖c8 (24...♕e1+ 25 ♘d1 ♖c8 26 ♗f4+ e5 27 ♕b3 ♖c7 28 ♖xc7, with a won position) 25 ♕f4 ♕xf4 26 ♗xf4+ ♔a7 27 ♗e3+ ♔b8 28 ♘a4, with advantage to White.



17 ♖he1 ♕f5 (17 . .. h5 18 ♕h4 ♕xg5+ 19 ♕xg5 ♗h6 20 ♕xh6 ♖xh6 21 ♗xc6+ ♗xc6 22 b4 ♔e7 23 bxc5, and an endgame is reached where White has an extra pawn and the initiative. He also has the advantage after 18...♕f5 19 ♘d5 axb5 20 ♘c7+ ♔f7 21 ♘xa8).

18 ♕g3 axb5 19 ♖d5 ♕f7 20 ♘xb5 ♖c8 21 ♕c3 ♖g8 22 ♖xc5 ♗e7 (bad is 22...♗xc5 23 ♕xc5, when there is no defence against 24 ♘d6+, or 22...♕d7 23 ♖d1) 23 ♔b1!, and Black is helpless against the threats of 24 ♗xe7 and 24 ♕c4.

B(iii). 16 ♕h4 ♘bd7 17 ♖he1 ♕g7 18 ♗e4 ♗xe4 19 ♘xe4



19...♖c8 (19...♔f7 20 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 21 b4) 20 ♕h3! ♗e7 (bad is 20...♖c6 21 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 22 ♖xe6+, or 20...♔f7 21 ♖xd7+ ♘xd7 22 ♘d6+) 21 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 22 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 23 ♖exd6 ♖c7 24 ♖f1+ ♔g8 25 ♗h6 ♕e7 26 ♕f3, and Black is helpless.

Black also faces difficult problems after 16...♘xd3+ 17 ♖xd3 ♘d7 18 ♖e1 ♕f5 19 g4 ♕f7 20 ♖ed1 ♗c6 (after 20...♗g7 21 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 22 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 23 ♗f6 ♗xf6 24 ♕xf6 the coordination between White's queen and knight guarantees him the advantage) 21 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 22 ♘e4 ♗e7 23 ♗xe7 ♕f4+ (23... ♕xe7 24 ♘f6+) 24 ♔b1.

Although Black is the exchange up, his position does not inspire confidence, e.g. 24...♕xe4 25 ♗d6 ♔f7 26 ♕e7+ ♔g8 27 ♖f1.

I have given in full the analysis made by Lepyoshkin. If one unconditionally takes on trust the variations indicated, then it may seem at first that Black's entire opening system has been struck a serious blow. But after checking the analysis in detail, I discovered in it several mistakes and areas of unexplored territory, which, in my opinion, must shake seriously the conclusions drawn by Lepyoshkin:

I. In variation A (15...♗e7), the position on p.77, which Lepyoshkin assesses as won for White, is still far from clear. Only one possibility, 23...♘c5, is analysed, but Black also has other resources, in particular, 23...♕f2, with the follow-up 24 ♕d6 ♕b6 25 ♕e7 ♖a7 26 ♖xe6 ♕c5.

II. In variation B(ii) – p.78 – after 15...♘c5 16 ♗xb5+ ♘c6 17 ♖he1 h5 18 ♕h4 ♕f5 19 ♘d5 axb5 20 ♘c7+ ♔f7 21 ♘xa8 Lepyoshkin considers that White has the advantage. But Black can continue 21...♕xg5+ 22 ♕xg5 ♗h6, when both 23 ♖f1+ ♔g7 24 ♕xh6+ ♔xh6 25 ♘c7 b4 26 ♖d6 (26 ♖f6 ♔g7) 26...♖c8 27 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 28 ♖xe6 ♘d4, and 23 ♕xh6 ♖xh6 24 ♘c7 b4 25 ♖d6 g5 are favourable for him.

Besides, in the main line, 17...♕f5 18 ♕g3 axb5 19 ♖d5 ♕f7 20 ♘xb5 ♖c8 21 ♕c3, Lepyoshkin considers only 21...♖g8, and overlooks an excellent tactical possibility for Black: 21...♘b4!, and now 22 ♕xh8 ♘cd3+ 23 ♖xd3 (if 23 ♔d1, then 23...♘xb2+ 24 ♔e2 ♗a6! 25 c4 ♘xc4, and Black wins) 23...♘xd3+ 24 ♔b1 (24 ♔d1 ♘f2+) 24...♕f2! 25 ♖xe6+ ♔d7 26 ♕xh7+ ♔xe6 27 ♕xg6+ ♔e5! 28 ♕xd3 ♕e1+ 29 ♗c1 ♗e4, and White is defenceless.

After 23 ♔b1 ♗xd5 24 ♘d6+ ♔d7 25 ♘xf7 ♗xa2+ 26 ♔a1 Black can, if he wishes, force a draw by 26...♖a8 27 ♖e2 (27 ♕d4+ ♗d5+ 28 ♔b1 ♖a1+!) 27...♗d5+, but he can also attempt to play for a win with 26...♘xe1, meeting 27 ♘e5+ by boldly advancing his king: 27...♔d6 28 b3 ♘exc2+ 29 ♔b2 ♔d5! 30 ♕f6 ♘d4.

The following possibility for Black should also be mentioned: 21...♕f2! 22 ♕xh8 ♕xe1+ 23 ♖d1 ♘d3+!, when White loses, while after 22 ♗e3 he has to reckon not only with 22...♕xe1+ 23 ♕xe1 exd5, but also with the spectacular 22...♘b4!

III. In variation B(iii) – p.78 – Lepyoshkin concentrates on 19...♖c8, and totally disregards the stronger 19...♗e7!, when it is doubtful whether White has more than a draw: 20 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 21 ♘d6+ ♔d8 22 ♘f7+ (22 ♕d4 ♖f8) 22...♔e8.

But 18...h6! (rather than 18...♗xe4) is even more convincing: 19 ♗xb7 hxg5 20 ♕g3 (20 ♖xe6+ ♘xe6 21 ♕e4 ♘dc5 22 ♕c6+ ♔f7 23 ♗xa8 ♖h4) 20...♖a7 21 ♗c6 ♔f7!, when Black repulses the assault, retaining a material advantage, Shabanov-Krimmerman, corr. 1986, since after 22 b4 the white king's position of the white king gives serious cause for alarm.

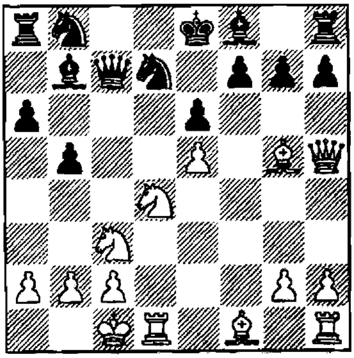
IV. And, finally, Lepyoshkin does not consider at all the important continuation 14...♘c5, where after 15 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 16 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 the move 13...g6 proves very useful for Black. In this case it is doubtful whether White can hope for an advantage.

Thus Lepyoshkin's analysis does not bury the entire Variation, but merely provides additional material for reflection and creative argument.

THE SEARCH CONTINUES

We can thus draw a kind of intermediate conclusion: in the position from the last diagram, neither the timid 12 ♗f4, nor either of the wild knight charges, promises White any real advantage. There remain two 'pressurising' queen moves, 12 ♕h5 and 12 ♕g4.

After 12 ♕h5



in view of the threat of 13 ♘xe6 (note that in all variations White aims to mount his attack against the e6 square, which has been weakened by the departure of the bishop from c8) Black has three replies. Two of these lose:

12...♕xe5 13 ♗xb5 axb5 14 ♘xe6 (nevertheless!) 14...♕xe6 (if 14...g6, then 15 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 16 ♕e2+ ♘e5 17 ♕xe5+ and 18 ♖d8 mate) 15 ♖he1 g6 16 ♘xb5, with decisive threats.

Or 12...♕b6 – here the refutation is more difficult to find, but there is one – 13 ♗xb5 axb5 14 ♘dxb5 g6 (if immediately 14...♖xa2, then 15 ♖d6! ♖a1+ 16 ♘b1, and Black cannot meet the threat of 17 ♖xe6+, since 16...♗xd6 loses to 17 ♘xd6+) 15 ♕h3 (renewing the threat to e6 after 16 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 17 ♖xd6) 15...♖xa2! 16 ♖d6! ♖a1+.

All this occurred in the game Kondratiev-Ermilov (Central Chess Club Championship Semi-Final, Moscow 1962). Here the players 'exchanged compliments' – 17 ♘b1? ♗xd6? 18 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 19 ♕h6+ ♔g8 20 ♘e8, and Black resigned. He had a defence in 17...♗e7! 18 ♗xe7 (or 18 ♖xb6 ♗xg5+ 19 ♔d1 ♘xb6, when Black has a material advantage, and it is the white king that is more likely to come under attack than his black opposite number) 18...♕xb5 19 ♗f6 ♘xf6 20 ♖xe6+ fxe6 21 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 22 ♕xf6+ ♔c7 23 ♕xh8 ♕e2, and Black starts a decisive counter-attack. But the move earlier White, too, could have won, by continuing 17 ♔d2!, and if 17...♗xd6 (activating the queen does not help – 17...♕f2+ 18 ♘e2 ♗xd6 19 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 20 ♕h6+ ♔g8 21 ♘e8), then 18 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 19 exd6 ♖xh1. Despite Black's material advantage, it is the white queen that dominates the position. Black cannot hold out for long: 20 ♕h6 ♘c6 21 ♕g7 ♖f8 22 ♘b5, or 20...♗a6 21 ♕g7 ♖f8 22 ♗e7 ♘c6 23 ♗xf8 ♘xf8 24 ♘e4.

On the other hand, Black's third reply in the diagram position – 12...g6! – is perfectly adequate to successfully repel White's onslaught. One possibility here which has occurred in practice is 13 ♕h4, when Black has a choice between two alternatives.

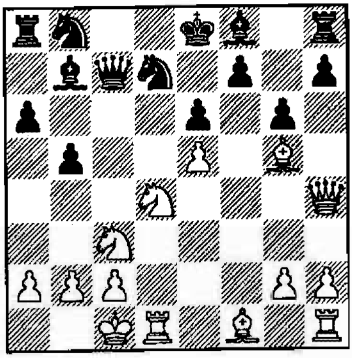
One is a double-edged and, in my opinion, unreliable continuation, in which Black's position all the time hangs literally by a thread: 13...♕xe5 14 ♗xb5 axb5 14 ♖he1 ♕c5, and if 16 ♕f4 (the rook sacrifice 16 ♖xe6+, as played in a certain correspondence game, did not prove successful: 16...fxe6 17 ♘xe6 ♕f5! 18 ♘xb5 h6! 19 ♘ec7+ ♔f7 20 ♕c4+ ♔g7 21 ♘e6+ ♔h7, and Black beat off the attack), then 16...♗d6! 17 ♘xe6 ♗xf4+ 18 ♘xf4+ ♔f8 19 ♗h6+ ♔g8 20 ♖e8+ ♘f8 21 ♘cd5 ♗xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♘d7! 23 ♖xa8 ♕g1+ 24 ♔d2 ♕xh2, and in the game Berkovich-Minakov (Moscow Championship Quarter-Final 1970) Black won.

The alternative is 13...♘c6 14 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 15 ♘e4 ♗xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♖c8 17 ♗f6 (otherwise the e5 pawn cannot be saved) 17...♘xf6 18 exf6 ♗h6+ 19 ♔b1 ♗g5!, and after the elimination of the pawn at f6, the difference in strength of the opposite-colour bishops is clearly in Black's favour: 20 a4 0-0 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♗xb5 ♗xf6, and the position of White's king on the queenside is hardly defensible (Razuvayev-Unanyan, Baku 1961).

However, White can play much more resolutely: 14 ♗xb5! axb5 15 ♘dxb5 ♕b6 16 ♕f4! (this manoeuvre, found by van der Vliet, is significantly stronger than 16 ♗f6 ♘xf6 17 ♕xf6 ♗h6+ 18 ♔b1 0-0) 16...♘dxe5 (16...♘cxe5 17 ♖xd7! ♔xd7 18 ♕xe5) 17 ♘e4 ♕xb5 (17...f5 18 ♘ed6+ ♗xd6 19 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 20 ♗f6 is also hopeless) 18 ♘f6+ ♔e7 19 ♖d7+! ♘xd7 20 ♘d5+, and White triumphs (analysis by van der Vliet). Of course, it is early as yet to draw a final conclusion. Although Black's position is very dangerous, a defence should continue to be sought for him with 17...♗g7.

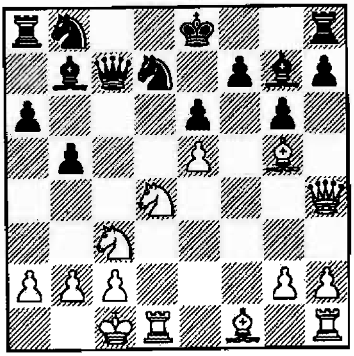
Nevertheless, it cannot be considered that the study of the move 13 ♕h4 is complete, and this was confirmed in a game played in the 1975 USSR Spartakiad in Riga between **Gennady Kuzmin** and myself.

When in this game the following position was reached,



I was afraid to play 13...♕xe5, since, in comparison with the Berkovich-Minakov game given above, White could have prepared some improvement. Of course, there were arguments for playing the already approved 13...♘c6, or 13...h6, which had not yet occurred in practice. But I thought it useful to try another new continuation.

13...♗g7



It turns out that, for the moment, the weakening of the d6 square is not so dangerous, since on the thematic 14 ♗xb5 Black replies 14...0-0!, and promptly seizes the initiative. The sacrifice 14 ♘dxb5 axb5 15 ♘xb5 is parried by the simple 15...♕xe5 16 ♘d6+ ♔f8, when White cannot meet the threats against b2 and a2.

But if Black should succeed in castling, the weakening of the white e-pawn and the possibilities of an attack on the queenside will give him a marked advantage, and after prolonged thought Kuzmin took the decision to utilise at any cost his single trump – to try to keep the black king in the centre.

14 ♗e7 ♕xe5

During the game I could see no specific refutation of 14...♗xe5, and nor do I see one now. I avoided the move on the grounds that the place for the bishop is at g7, where it is 'solidly' placed, and where it cements together all the weakened dark squares on the kingside.

In the resulting position White is obliged to play forcefully: he has no time for the quiet completion of his development by 15 ♗e2 and ♖he1, since he has to reckon with the imminent threat of 15...h6 and 16...g5. The retreat of the bishop, 15 ♗a3, can be neutralised with 15...♗f6 followed by 16...♘c6, or even with 15...g5!?

15 ♗xb5 axb5

Black accepts both the challenge, and the sacrifice. After the game I established that it would have been much more practical to decline the sacrifice, by playing 15...♕h5. Then after 16 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 17 ♕xh5 gxh5, firstly, White's g-pawn is weak, and secondly, the two black bishops sweep the entire board.

It is interesting to note that the improvement I found did not go wasted. Knowing my game with Kuzmin, grandmaster Quinteros was not averse to repeating it when we met in the 1976 Interzonal

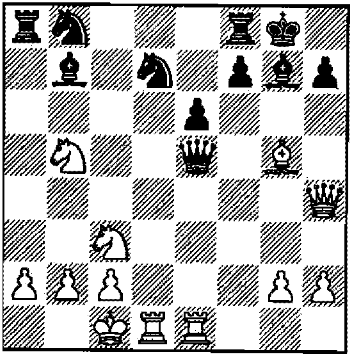
Tournament at Manila. Unfortunately for the trusting Argentinean, the first edition of the present book with the innovation 15...♕h5 was still at the printer's in Moscow, and at the board Quinteros was literally flabbergasted by the queen manoeuvre. The effect of the innovation quickly showed itself: after 18 ♗g5 (better, of course, is 18 ♗h4, but even then Black gains an excellent position by continuing 18...♘e5) 18...♖g8! 19 ♗h4 ♗e5 20 ♗g3 ♗xg2 21 ♖he1 ♗xg3 22 hxg3 ♖xg3 23 ♘f5 ♖g6 24 ♘d6+ ♔e7 White found himself in a lost position.

Evidently White should play 16 ♗a4, but the simple 16...♕xh4 17 ♗xh4 0-0 gives Black a good game. And if White should be tempted by the variation 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 20 ♖xd7, he ends up in a somewhat inferior position: 20...♗xg2 21 ♖g1 ♗xc3 22 bxc3 ♗d5.

16 ♘dxb5 g5 17 ♗xg5

17 ♕b4 will not do, because of 17...♘c6 18 ♘d6+ ♔xe7 19 ♘f5+ ♔f6 20 ♕xb7 ♘c5 21 ♕xc6 ♖hc8.

17...0-0 18 ♖he1



The black king is at last out of the firing line; Black is a piece up, but his position is extremely precarious. To a considerable extent this is due to the insecure position of his queen in the centre, while in addition one of the white rooks can be transferred along the third rank to the kingside, whereupon White's attack will become decisive. I therefore decided to return the piece, and by conceding material to attempt to seize the initiative.

18...♕f5 19 ♘d6 ♕g6 20 ♘xb7 ♗xc3

This is the point of Black's plan: after defending the kingside with his queen, he breaks up the pawns in front of the white king. At the same time the black queen also takes part in the attack, at any rate for the time being. The idea is not bad, although objectively speaking it is hardly sufficient to achieve equality.

21 bxc3 ♖xa2 22 ♖d3 ♘c6

Opening the way for the second rook to the queenside. The alternative – 22...♔h8 23 ♖e2 – leaves White with the advantage. It would appear that now too White will gain a material advantage, but...

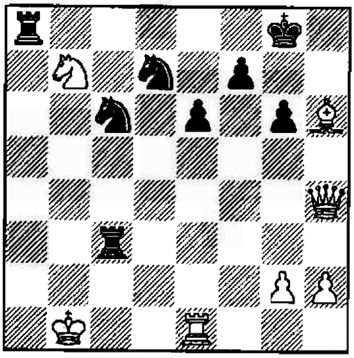
23 ♗h6 ♖fa8!!

An unexpected continuation, but the only correct one. The plausible 23...♖b8? 24 ♖g3 ♖xc2+ 25 ♔d1 leads to an immediate loss for Black.

24 ♖g3 ♖xc2+ 25 ♔b1

This is the point! The king cannot go to d1 in view of mate on the move, but now the fact that it is on the same file as the white knight enables Black to maintain approximate material equality.

25...♖xc3+ 26 ♖xg6+ hxg6



An amazing position! Despite the loss of his queen, Black's threats are very real.

In particular, 27...♖aa3 (on 27 ♔b2) guarantees him at least a draw. Therefore White, who has a queen for a rook(!), has to reconcile himself to the loss of a piece.

27 ♗c1 ♖b8 28 ♗b2 ♖xb7 29 ♖c1

On account of the mate at h8 Black is unable to retain his second rook for the attack (29...♖cb3), and he is therefore forced to exchange it and begin searching not for counterplay, but for a drawing line. However, he has perfectly adequate compensation for the queen, and he merely has to ensure the safety of his king by neutralising the pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal. This aim is best met by 29...♖b4, driving back the queen, then exchanging on c1, and posting one of his knights at e5. In this way Black could have been confident of a draw.

An alternative was to exchange on c1 and then sacrifice the exchange on b2. During the game I was afraid to go in for this continuation, but later in analysis I discovered a whole series of positions where no win for White is apparent.

However, the set-up planned in the game also does not yet lose.

29...♖xc1+ 30 ♔xc1 e5

Hoping somehow to give up the e-pawn and one of the knights for the bishop. But now White sharply activates his forces.

31 ♕c4 ♖b6

Black immediately deviates from the correct path. He should have played 31...♘e7, and then endeavoured to transfer his rook to b6. True, even the move order chosen does not yet rule this out.

32 h4 ♘f6

But now 32...♘e7 was virtually obligatory. After the move played White's queen literally plunges in among the black pieces, and my position definitely ceased to appeal to me.

33 ♕c5 ♘d7

An admission of guilt!

34 ♕d6 ♘cb8 35 ♕e7 ♖c6+ 36 ♔d1 ♖e6 37 ♕d8+ ♔g7 38 g4 ♖f6 39 h5

Although it is not particularly desirable for Black to play his rook to f1, White should perhaps have delayed forcing matters, and for the moment played 39 ♔e2.

Now Black at least gains some play with his rook.

39...♖f1+ 40 ♔e2 ♖h1 41 ♗a3

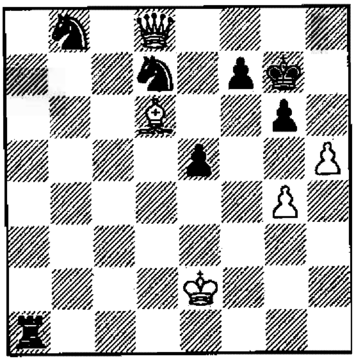
This obvious move – the bishop cannot be maintained on the long diagonal – was sealed by White, and I was faced with the eternal question: what to do?

Neither now nor later is the exchange on h5 possible, since after a check on g5 the recapture on h5 is decisive. At the same time White has a mass of possibilities for strengthening his position.

I will not now describe how my analysis proceeded: the reader can familiarise himself with examples of adjournment analysis in much more detail in the third chapter of this book. I will merely say that, when I was already inclined to regard Black's position as hopeless, an idea came into my head...

On the resumption there followed:

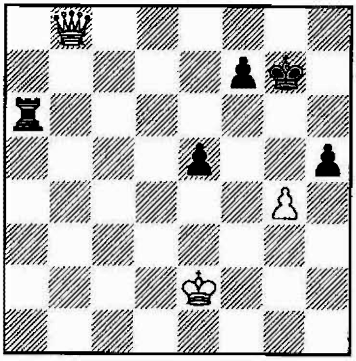
41...♖a1 42 ♗d6



42...♖a6!! 43 ♗xb8

White fails to see through his opponent's intention – to take play into a drawn ending with queen and pawn against rook and pawn, otherwise he would have preferred 43 ♕e7, maintaining the tension. Black would then have been faced with considerable difficulties.

43...♘xb8 44 ♕xb8 gxh5



And here I saw from my opponent's face that he had realised his irreparable mistake. Black has achieved an impregnable fortress, or in other words, a positional draw.

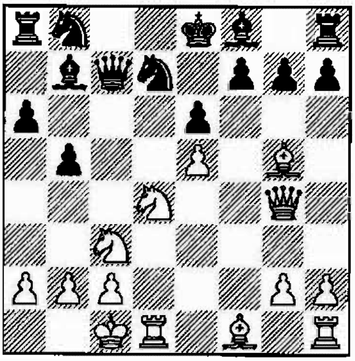
The remainder is therefore simple:

45 ♕xe5+ ♔g8 46 ♕b8+ ♔g7 47 ♕b2+ ♔g8 48 gxh5 ♖e6+ 49 ♔f3 ♔h7 50 ♔f4 ♖h6 51 ♔g5 ♖e6 52 ♕h2 ♖h6 53 ♕f4 ♔g7 54 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 55 ♔xh6 Drawn.

However, after 12 ♕h5 g6! the move 13 ♕g4 occurs more frequently in practice. White continues his thematic attack on e6, but it soon becomes clear that, in comparison with the position examined below after 12 ♕g4, the inclusion of ...g6 is to Black's advantage. He continues 13...♕xe5 14 ♗xb5 h5 (also possible, however, is 14... axb5 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♖he1 h5! 17 ♕h4 ♕f5, when it very much appears as though White's attack is on its last legs) 15 ♕h4 ♕xg5+! (here is the advantage of ...g7-g6!) 16 ♕xg5 ♗h6 17 ♕xh6 ♖xh6 18 ♗f1 (similarly after 18 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 Black stands better, thanks to his strong bishop and imposing pawn mass in the centre and on the kingside) 18...h4! 19 ♖g1 ♔e7 20 ♘b3 ♘c6, and Black gained a positional advantage (Bojkovic-Vitolinsh, Yugoslavia-USSR, 1963).

IN THE CHESS JUNGLE

But in the event of 12 ♕g4, which is considered the main continuation,

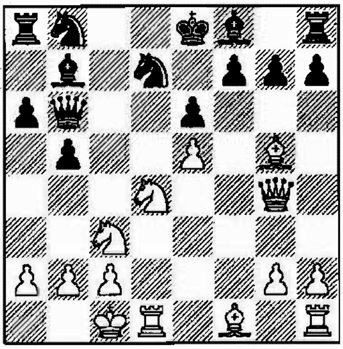


colossal complications with numerous possibilities arise. Here Black has two radically different plans. The first of these – 12... ♕b6, is a kind of flank defence of e6, which at any rate seriously hinders White's vigorous intentions. Black's second plan is associated with the aggressive, but also highly dangerous 12...♕xe5, and has the aim of eliminating the annoying pawn at e5, and, correspondingly, the possible intrusion of the white pieces at d6. It is true that the black queen is prematurely advanced into the centre, and that White can, with gain of time, begin a frontal assault on e6 and on the black king's position.

We will consider these two plans in turn, but before doing so we should point out that neither of the two following possibilities is playable for Black: 12...♘xe5 13 ♘xe6! fxe6 14 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 15 ♗xb5+ axb5 16 ♘xb5, or 12...♘c6 13 ♗xb5! axb5 14 ♘cxb5 and 15 ♘xe6, with a swiftly crushing attack.

Black also has serious difficulties after 12...h5. White does best to reply 13 ♕f4 (although 13 ♕h4 ♘c6 14 ♗xb5 axb5 15 ♘dxb5, or 14 ♗e2 is also of interest) 13...♘c6 14 ♗xb5 axb5 15 ♘dxb5 ♕b6 (15...♕b8 is also met by 16 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 17 ♕xf7+ ♘e7 18 ♖d1+) 16 ♖xd7! ♔xd7 17 ♕xf7+ ♔c8 18 ♕e8+ ♘d8 19 ♖d1 with decisive threats, or 13...♗c5 14 ♘f3! ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘c6 16 ♕e4 ♘dxe5 (16...♕xe5 17 ♕xc6 ♕xg5+ 18 ♔b1 ♖d8 19 ♘e4 ♕f5 20 ♗h3 with a crushing attack) 17 f4, and White's attack develops unchecked (analysis by van der Vliet).

After 12...♕b6



White must either continue the purposeful mobilisation of his forces, or attempt to combine the development of his kingside with an immediate attack on e6, and, consequently, on the black king stranded in the centre. The latter plan gives rise to the idea of a typical sacrifice, which is always in the air: 13 ♗xb5 axb5 14 ♘dxb5.

The threat of 15 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 16 ♖xd6 (attacking e6 with gain of time) is unpleasant, but it is Black to move, and he can effectively parry it by playing 14...♘xe5.

Weaker is 14...♘c6 15 ♖d6!, with the same threat, and now either 15...♘c5 16 b4 ♗xd6 17 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 18 ♖f1 ♘xe5 19 bxc5 ♕xd6 20 ♖xf7+ ♔e8 21 cxd6 ♘xg4 22 ♖xb7 (Gumerov-Tatarintsev, Bashkir Championship 1961), or 15...♗xd6 16 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 17 ♖f1 ♘cxe5 18 ♕xe6 f6 19 ♗xf6 (Tskhai-Bogomyachkov, Chita 1965, went 19 ♗h6 ♗xg2 20 ♖xf6+, and Black resigned) 19...gxf6 20 ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 21 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 22 ♕e6+ ♔f8 23 ♕xe5!, and, as pointed out by Boleslavsky, the threat of mate in two prevents Black from keeping his enormous material advantage. 23...♕f2 24 ♕xh8+ ♔e7 25 ♕e5+ ♔d7 26 ♘xb7 – this is all in White's favour.

After 14...♘xe5 Boleslavsky gives the following variation: 15 ♕f4 (obviously the main continuation of the attack) 15...♘bc6! (in the game Simovich-Vitolinsh, Moscow 1962, Black played the weaker 15...♘bd7?, and after 16 ♖xd7 Black loses after either 16...f6 17 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 18 ♗xf6 ♘g6 19 ♕c7, as occurred in the game, or 16...♔xd7 17 ♖d1+ ♔e8 18 ♕xe5) 16 ♖he1 h6 17 ♕f2 ♕a5 18 ♗f4 f6, where in his opinion it is completely unclear as to whether White's initiative compensates for the sacrificed piece.

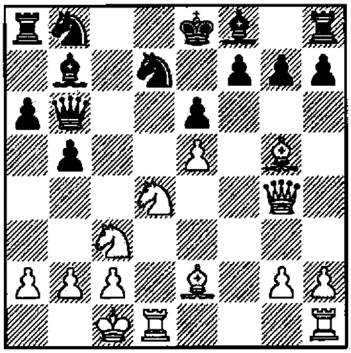
But there are some significant errors in his analysis. Thus Black's 16th move is clearly dubious on account of 17 ♖xe5! (rather than 17 ♕f2) 17...♘xe5 (17...hxg5 18 ♖xe6+!) 18 ♕xe5 f6 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♕xf6 ♖g8 21 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 22 ♕xe6+. Therefore the only correct continuation for Black is 16...♗c5!, and if 17 b4 (17 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 18 ♖xd6 ♕a5 favours Black) 17...♘xb4 18 ♖xe5 (18 ♕xe5 0-0) 18...♘xa2+ 19 ♘xa2 ♕xb5, when Black's position is better. White should probably choose 17 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♕xe5 0-0, although here too Black has everything in order.

Along with this aggressive bishop sacrifice, it is also hardly expedient for White to switch to the defence of his e-pawn by 13 ♗f4 or 13 ♕g3. Both these moves can be classed as deviations from the overall policy of The Variation: after all, at a very early stage of the opening (on the 8th move) White as it were took it upon himself to play boldly, utilising his lead in development for an attack.

But here after 13 ♗f4 the simple 13...♘c5, with the idea of ...b5-b4, gives Black, as pointed out by Boleslavsky, good counterplay, e.g. 14 ♗d3 b4 15 ♘ce2 ♘bd7 16 ♖hf1 ♘xd3+ 17 ♖xd3 ♘c5 18 ♖dd1 ♖c8 19 ♔b1 ♗e4, or 14 a3 ♘c6 15 ♘f3 b4 16 axb4 ♕xb4.

In the event of 13 ♕g3 White removes an attack from e6: 13...♘c6 14 ♘f3 h6 15 ♗d2 0-0-0 16 ♘e4 ♘c5 17 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 18 ♗e2, and in the game Spasjoevic-Stanculescu (Student Olympiad 1967) Black could now have attained a good game by advancing his g-pawn – 18...g5.

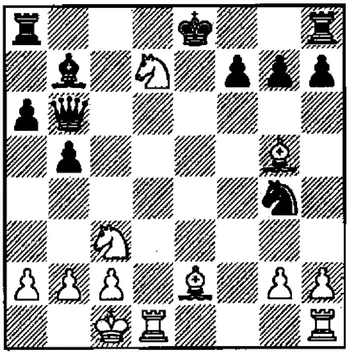
Clearly White must seek a golden mean between the risky 13 ♗xb5 and the excessively cautious defence of his e-pawn. This aim is ideally answered by 13 ♗e2.



By sacrificing not a piece, but his e-pawn, in the majority of games played with this variation White has gained a dangerous attack. Black is practically forced to venture into 13...♘xe5, which is of course risky, but what can one suggest instead?

Thus to 13...♗c5 White has the good reply 14 ♗e3 (the immediate 14 ♘e4! also looks very strong to me) 14...g6 15 ♘e4 ♗xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♘c6 (if 16...♖a7, then 17 b4! ♗xb4 18 ♘xb5, winning literally everything in sight) 17 ♘xc6 ♗xe3+ 18 ♔b1 ♗c5 (18...♖c8 fails to 19 ♖d6! ♗c5 20 ♘e7, when the rook at d6 is invulnerable) 19 b4 ♗f8 (no better is 19...♗e7 20 ♗f3 ♖c8 21 ♘xe7 ♔xe7 22 ♖d6 ♕c7 23 ♖hd1 ♖hd8 24 ♕h4+ ♔e8 25 ♗c6, and the 'mortal' pin on the knight proves decisive) 20 ♕f3! (threatening 21 ♖hf1) 20...♕c7 21 ♖hf1 ♘b6 22 ♘e7!, and wins.

After 13...♘c6 14 ♘xe6! ♘cxe5 15 ♘xf8! ♘xg4 16 ♘xd7 the position reached is worthy of a diagram.



White's two minor pieces are much stronger than the queen, since the black king is quite simply unable to escape to either flank. On the only reasonable move, 16...♕g6 (otherwise White captures the knight, and obtains in addition a sufficient material equivalent) there follows 17 h4! ♘f6 (or 17...♘f2 18 ♖he1! ♘xd1 19 ♗g4+ ♕e6 20 ♗xe6+, and White has a winning advantage) 18 ♗d3! (by this attack on the queen White gains a tempo for his offensive, since queenside castling was now prepared) 18...♘e4 19 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 20 ♘e5 ♗xd3 21 ♘xg6 ♗xg6 22 ♖de1+! ♔f8 (if 22...♔d7, then simply 23 h5 f6 24 hxg6 fxg5 25 ♖xh7) 23 h5 ♗f5 24 ♖hf1 ♗g4 25 h6 f5 26 ♖e4! ♔g8 27 ♖e7, and Black stands badly.

After 13...♘xe5, events normally develop as follows: 14 ♕g3 (14 ♕h5 – as played in Spasov-Ajanski, Bulgarian Championship

1965 – is weaker: 14...♘bd7 15 ♖he1, and now by 15...g6 Black could have attained a reasonable position, plus an extra pawn; however, 14 ♕h3 is worth considering) 14...♘bd7 15 ♗f4 (if 15 ♖he1, then 15...♗c5! 16 ♗e3 0-0-0, and Black can breathe a sigh of relief) 15...f6.

This move, which occurred in the correspondence game Popescu-Betsech (Rumania 1973), looks highly risky. The only justification for it, and a highly dubious one at that, is the fact that 15...♘g6 (incidentally, when analysing this position I came to the conclusion that 15...b4? is also doubtful, on account of 16 ♘a4! ♕a5 17 ♘b3 ♕xa4 18 ♗xe5 0-0-0 19 ♖d4, with advantage to White) is similarly unpromising for Black: 16 ♗c7 ♕c5 17 ♘b3 ♕a7 18 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 19 ♖d1+ ♔e8 20 ♘xb5, and the king is defenceless.

But after 15...f6 White should have played not 16 ♕h3, although even here 16... ♔f7 17 ♖hf1 g6 18 ♘f3 ♗xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♖a7 20 ♗e4 left Black with a dubious position, but 16 ♗g4, or first 16 ♗h5+. The impression gained is that White's attack is highly formidable.

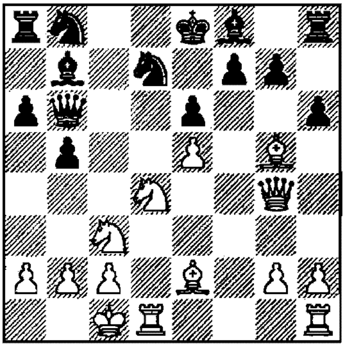
In tracing the fate of the move 12...♕b6, when I was already working on this book I checked all the more or less reasonable possibilities for Black after 13 ♗e2, trying to find that support on which one might construct a defence. One day the thought occurred to me: why not drive the white bishop away from its good position before starting 'pawn-grabbing'?

Translated into chess language, this idea is very simple: Black can include the preliminary 13...h6, when on 14 ♗f4 he has the possibility of the bayonet thrust 14...g5. Of course, I realised that it wasn't immediately possible to 'pass a verdict' as to whom it favoured, and that only practical testing could give the answer. And after a short analysis had convinced me that it was worth trying, fate afforded me the opportunity to employ my new idea.

IS THE VARIATION ALIVE?

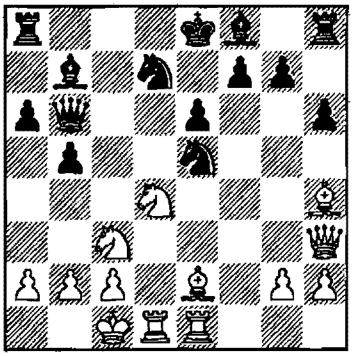
In the 1974 International Tournament at Las Palmas, the pairings gave me the black pieces against **Ljubomir Kavalek**. It was highly probable that my opponent would begin the game by advancing his king's pawn, and that in reply to the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian would play 6 ♗g5, and I could not resist the temptation to 'revive the good old days'. Especially since the true worth of my idea had of course to be tested in a game with a strong opponent.

And so, **13 ...h6**.



It was apparent that Kavalek had not expected this move, and he spent a long time in thought. But immediately after his reply it was my turn to bend over the board: the rejoinder 14 ♕h3! proved very effective, and took me quite unawares. In my preliminary calculations I had underestimated it, and only during the game did I see that 14...♗c5 would not work, on account of 15 ♘xe6! ♕xe6 16 ♗g4 ♕g6 17 ♗xd7+ ♔f8 18 ♗e3!, when White wins.

Black therefore chose **14...♘xe5 15 ♖he1 ♘bd7 16 ♗h4** (White already had to reckon with the possible exchange sacrifice 16... hxg5 17 ♕xh8 0-0-0).



16...g6 17 ♗g4 h5! (the only move, after which the play takes on a forced aspect) **18 ♗xe6 ♗h6+ 19 ♔b1 fxe6 20 ♘xe6 ♖h7?** (this might have cost Black dearly; his only chance was 20...♔f7) **21 ♗g3?** (a mistake in reply; 21 ♖xd7!, luring the black king into a discovered check, would have given White a decisive attack) **21...♖e7 22 ♗xe5 ♕xe6** (it was not yet too late for Black to lose, by 22...♖xe6 23 ♗d4!) **23 ♕xe6** (the tempting 23 ♗d6? fails to 23...♕xe1) **23...♖xe6 24 ♗f4! ♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1+ ♔f7**, and with complete equality – and opposite-colour bishops! – on the board, the opponents in this long-suffering game agreed to a **draw**.

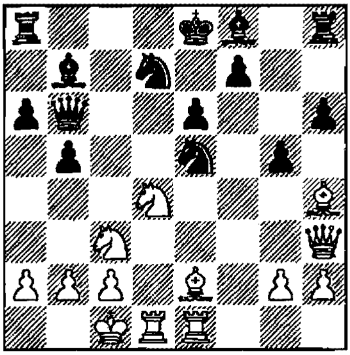
Continuing my searching, I was soon able to establish precisely that even after the best defence in this game, namely 20...♔f7, with energetic play: 21 ♖xd7+! (after 21 ♘g5+ ♗xg5 22 ♗xg5 ♔g8 23 ♗e7 ♖h7 Black repulses the attack, Y.Grünfeld-Klinger, Lugano 1984) 21...♘xd7 22 ♘f4 ♘f6 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf4 24 ♗xh8 ♖xh8 25 ♕d7+ ♔f6 26 ♕e7+ ♔f5 27 g3 White creates irresistible threats along the f-file.

Of course, this game did not by any means shake the reputation of the move 13 ♗e2. But didn't Black have an improvement somewhere along the way?

Naturally, I could not rest content, and before my next meeting with Kavalek, at Manila in the autumn of 1975, I found an improvement which, however, did not pretend to be a final assessment of the resulting position.

Here (*see previous diagram*) Black deviated, having prepared, instead of 16...g6, a surprise:

16...g5!



This move proved to be so paradoxical that my opponent spent a long time in thought, and then became somehow rather sad. Indeed, the white bishop has only just left g5, and now Black once again entices it there, for the sake of which he parts with his extra pawn.

But meanwhile after **17 ♗xg5 ♖g8!** the overall idea of The Variation is revealed in its purest form. Without concerning himself over the safety of his king or keeping a material advantage, Black aims for active counterplay with his pieces. Here he obtains this, since his formerly inactive king's rook is included in the counter-attack. White is evidently forced to gamble on his attack, since after the retreat of the bishop to h4 Black has a mass of tempting possibilities, such as 18...♗xg2 or 18...♗c5.

After spending a mass of time in thought, Kavalek embarked on a sacrificial path.

18 ♘xe6 hxg5 19 ♗h5

Here I made a blunder of a psychological nature. At home, for all the sharpness and complexity of the position, I had satisfied myself that White must not play 19 ♗h5 on account of 19...g4!, and after 20 ♗xf7+ (there is nothing else, since 20...♕xe6 is threatened) 20...♔xf7 21 ♕h7+ ♖g7! (but not 21...♔xe6 22 ♖xd7, or 21...♗g7 22 ♘g5+) White's attack is beaten off. Thus neither 22 ♘xg7 ♗xg7 23 ♖f1+ ♘f6, nor 22 ♖f1+ ♔xe6 leads White anywhere – black pieces alone are to be seen on the board.

But during the game, as I was checking these variations, I suddenly discovered an additional attacking resource for White: 22 ♖xd7+ ♘xd7 23 ♘g5+. Of course, I saw that I could advance my king – 23...♔f6, and now the win of the queen by 24 ♖e6+ (on 24 ♘ce4+ Black has 24...♔e7, and his king escapes safely to the queenside via d8) costs White too much. But what I didn't care for was 24 ♕h6+ ♖g6 25 ♖f1+. The fact that here the king can calmly retreat to e7, when the rook at g6 remains defended by the queen from b6, I quite simply overlooked!

After calculating for the first time these variations at the board – and miscalculating! – I somehow promptly lost confidence in the whole of my prepared analysis, and instead of checking once more the resulting position, I decided not to play 19...g4. And as a result I made not just a pseudo-blunder, but a real one.

19...♗d6?

Overlooking that White can strengthen decisively his attack on f7.

20 ♕f5

It is now that things become really bad for Black. The threat is 21 ♗xf7+ ♘xf7 22 ♘c5+ ♘de5 23 ♖xe5+ ♘xe5 24 ♕e6+, against which, incidentally, 20...♔e7 does not save Black. After mobilising literally all of my composure, I found the only saving chance – the amazing

20...♖h8?!!

The idea of this move is very soon revealed.

21 ♗xf7+ ♔e7

Black couldn't of course play 21...♘xf7 22 ♘xg5+ ♘fe5, since White has a mass of attractive ways of continuing the attack. Perhaps the most suitable is 23 ♘f7 ♖f8 24 ♘xd6+, when 24...♕xd6 is not good in view of the *zwischenzug* 25 ♕h5+.

22 ♘xg5 ♖h6?!

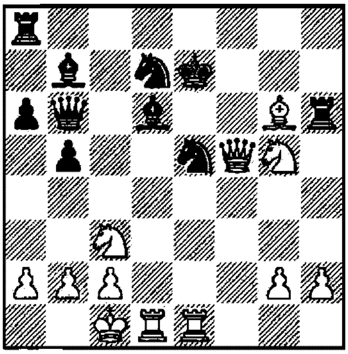
This is the idea: for the time being at least the critical e6 square is defended.

But even so, this would have been insufficient, had White now calmly played 23 ♘ge4, threatening a queen check at g5, and also threatening Black's 'central defender' – his bishop at d6. In this case Black's position would have been indefensible.

Instead White attempts to break through to the key e6 square, using the idea of interference.

23 ♗g6?

Threatening 24 ♕e6+ and 25 ♖xd6, but it is Black's turn to move.



23...♔d8!

By returning a part of his extra material, Black's king slips away from the epicentre of the 'earthquake'.

24 ♖xe5

White has nothing better. If 24 ♘e6+, then 24...♔c8 25 ♗e8 ♖f6, and the black pieces group together powerfully.

24 ...♘xe5 25 ♕f8+

White avoids a transparent trap: 25 ♕xe5 ♖xg6 26 ♘f7+ ♔d7 27 ♕f5+ ♔c7 28 ♕xg6 ♗f4+.

25...♔c7 26 ♘e6+ ♔d7 27 ♕xh6 ♘xg6 28 ♕g7+

It turns out that, although with his 26th move White has parried the bishop check at f4, he still cannot capture the knight at g6, on account of the queen check at e3. But 28 ♕h7+ was correct.

28 ...♘e7 29 ♘d4

Had White's queen been at h7, he could have continued the attack with 29 ♕h3. Here he does not have the analogous move 29 ♕g4, on account of that same check – 29...♕e3+. After the retreat of the knight, the position is rather in Black's favour, although he still has to meet certain threats, and in particular 30 ♘f5.

29...♖g8 30 ♕f7

Perhaps White should again have tried going the other way – 30 ♕h7 – to which I was planning to continue as in the game.

30...♕c5 31 ♕e6+ ♔e8

Of course, not 31...♔c7? 32 ♕xg8. Now Black's pieces, and in particular his bishops, control virtually the entire board. White has to play precisely to avoid an inferior position, and to this end 32 ♘dxb5 axb5 33 ♖xd6 ♗c8 34 ♕h6 ♖xg2 deserved consideration, reducing the number of black pawns to the minimum.

The subsequent stage of the game took place in a mutual time scramble.

32 ♘e4 ♗xe4 33 ♕xe4 ♕g5+ 34 ♔b1 ♕xg2

Black once again has a material advantage, but nevertheless he is unable to realise it. Although an attack is not threatened, the black king feels rather uncomfortable in the centre of the board.

35 ♕d3 ♕d5 36 a4

A draw becomes almost inevitable: Black has simply nothing left with which to win.

36...bxa4 37 ♕xa6 a3

Black utilises his last chance – he breaks up the pawn screen in front of the white king, and tries somehow to worry it. But...

38 ♕b5+ ♕xb5 39 ♘xb5 ♗xh2 40 ♘xa3 ♖g4 41 c3 ♔f7 42 b4

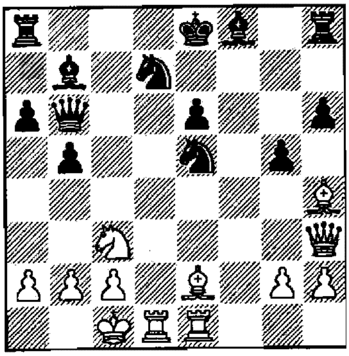
This move was sealed by White. Strictly speaking, there was no need and no point in adjourning the game...

42...♗e5 43 ♔c2 ♔e6 44 ♖d3 ♘d5 45 ♘b5 ♖g2+ 46 ♔b3 ♗f6 47 ♘d4+ ♔e5 48 ♘c2 ♘f4 49 ♖e3+ ♔d6 50 ♘d4 ♘d5 51 ♘b5+ ♔d7 52 ♖d3 ♔e6 53 ♘d4+ Drawn.

Thus the game with Kavalek inspired hope, especially since a year later another important development confirmed the viability of The Variation. In his game with Balashov at Manila, 1976, Henrique Mecking chose as Black 13...♘xe5 14 ♕g3 ♘bd7 15 ♗f4 b4!? 16 ♘a4 ♕a5 17 ♘b3 ♕xa4 18 ♗xe5, and reached a position which I had formerly rejected (cf. p.87). Only, instead of 18...0-0-0 19 ♖d4 with advantage to White, Mecking continued 18...♖c8! 19 ♖he1 ♘xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♕c6 21 ♔b1 ♕c7, with a good game. It is difficult to say whether or not White can play better at any point (some theorists have suggested, for instance, 17 b3), but in any case Mecking's idea deserves serious consideration.

To be fair, however, it should be said that this game may not be of practical importance, since instead of 14 ♕g3 White has 14 ♕h3! (as already mentioned), and after 14... ♘bd7 15 ♖he1 Black has nothing better than 15...h6 (bad is 15...♗c5 16 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 17 ♗g4, or 16...fxe6 17 ♗h5+ ♔f8 18 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 19 ♖xe6) 16 ♗h4 g5, and we reach a familiar position from the game with Kavalek. It is on the evaluation of this game that to a significant (and possible decisive) degree the fate of the entire continuation 12...♕b6 depends.

It is readily understandable that this unusually intriguing position was bound to attract the attention of inquisitive analysts. And here a significant argument was put forward by the Hungarian grandmaster Barczay, who found an idea of staggering beauty: after 16...g5 17 ♘xe6 fxe6



he suggested the stunning 18 ♗f2!!

In my analysis I had considered only 18 ♗xg5 hxg5 19 ♕xh8 0-0-0, and had overlooked White's pretty rejoinder. The subsequent events are very interesting:

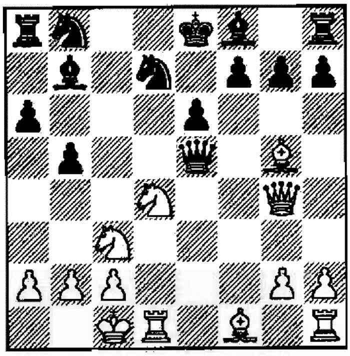
(a) 18...♕xf2 19 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 20 ♗xb5!, and if 20...axb5 21 ♖xe5 ♖h7 22 ♘xb5 ♖e7 23 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 24 ♕e8 mate. A correspondence game B.Atanasov-Pasev, 1989, went 20...♕xe1 21 ♖xe1 axb5 22 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 23 ♕xe5! ♖g8 (23...♖h7 24 ♕f5!) 24 ♘d5! ♖g7 25 ♕f6+ ♔e8 26 ♕e6+ ♔d8 (White also has a clear advantage after 26...♖e7 27 ♕g6+ ♔d7 28 ♕f5+ ♔d6 29 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 30 ♕xb5, or 27...♔d8 28 ♕f5) 27 ♕b6+ ♔c8 28 ♕f6!, and White won.

(b) 18...♗c5 (18...♕c6 19 ♗f3 ♘xf3 20 ♖xe6+) 19 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 20 ♗h5+ ♘f7 21 b4 0-0 22 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 23 ♕xh6 ♘a4 24 ♘xa4 bxa4 25 ♖xe6 ♕c7 26 ♖g6+ ♖g7 27 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 28 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 29 ♖d7+, and wins.

Evidently the only possibility for Black is 17...gxh4 (instead of 17...fxe6) 18 ♗h5 ♗d6. He has a material advantage, but White's initiative is very dangerous, and he has several tempting alternatives: 19 ♕f5, 19 ♘g7+ ♔f8 20 ♘f5, 19 ♖d4 and, finally, the simple 19 ♕xh4. I will not be surprised if Black is unable to save the game. At any event, few players would be willing to uphold Black's interests in this position.

Thus in the 12...♕b6 variation, the move 13 ♗e2! has set Black difficult problems.

On his 12th move Black has an alternative, which is radically different in character: 12...♕xe5.



This move has attracted the attention of numerous chess minds, if only for the reason that it is the most uncompromising. Its virtues and drawbacks have already been mentioned in passing: Black gets rid of the e5 pawn, and for a certain time includes his queen in the defence of e6. In a number of instances the bishop at g5 is hanging, but on the other hand the e-file is opened, and White can very soon make a frontal attack on e6 with a rook from e1.

For a long time it was thought that Black's 12th move could be refuted directly by that same sacrifice 13 ♗xb5 axb5 14 ♖he1 (a tempo is worth more than a bishop!), but the reply 14...h5!! was found, when, by removing one of the attacks on e6, Black can defend successfully: 15 ♕h4 ♕c5!

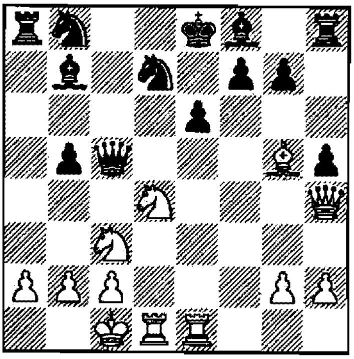
It is illogical to play 15...♕c7, since this allows White to capture on b5 with gain of tempo. Nevertheless, this move has been played, and here are the variations given by the Soviet master Selivanovsky – 16 ♘cxb5, and now:

A. 16...♕a5 (Black loses after 16...♕c4 17 ♘xe6, or 16...♕c8 17 ♕f4, with the threats of 18 ♘c7+ and 18 ♘xe6) 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 19 ♕c4!, and in Ljiljak-Goddard, corr. 1968, White won.

B. 16...♕b6 17 ♕f4 (bad is 17 ♗d8? ♕xd8 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 ♖xe6+ ♗e7 20 ♕f4 ♖a6, when after 21 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 22 ♕xc7 ♖xe6 23 ♕xb8 0-0 Black has a big material advantage) 17...♘a6 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 ♖f1, and Black's defensive resources are exhausted, e.g. 19...♘f6 20 ♗xf6 ♗c5 21 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 22 ♖xd6.

C. 16...♕c5 17 ♖xe6+! fxe6 18 ♘xe6 ♕e5 (if 18...♕f5, then 19 ♕c4 ♘f6 20 ♘xg7+ ♗xg7 21 ♘d6+ and wins, while on 18...♖xa2 there follows 19 ♘xc5 ♖a1+ 20 ♔d2 ♖xd1+ 21 ♔xd1 ♘xc5 – or 21...♗xc5 22 ♕f4 ♘a6 23 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 24 ♕xd6 – 22 ♕f4 ♘ba6 23 ♘d6+ ♔d7 24 ♘xb7 ♘xb7 25 ♕a4+, with a winning advantage) 19 ♕c4! ♘f6 (after 19...♗e7 20 ♘bc7+ ♔f7 21 ♘f4+ White wins by force) 20 ♘bc7+ ♔e7 21 ♗f4 ♕e4 22 ♗d6+.

Therefore after 15 ♕h4 the only correct move is 15...♕c5, when White has several possibilities:



A. 16 ♘xe6 (here this sacrifice does not achieve its aim) 16...fxe6 17 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 18 ♖de1 ♕f5 19 g4 ♕xg4 20 ♕f2+ ♔g8 21 ♗e7 ♘c6, and in the game A. Zaitsev-Byelov (RSFSR Championship 1966) which has already been given earlier, White had achieved precisely nothing.

B. It remains for us to check the variations where White refrains from the second sacrifice – on e6: 16 ♘cxb5 ♖xa2.

Evidently the strongest. The game Torre-Mariotti, Manila 1976, went 16...♗d5 17 ♖d3 ♘a6 18 a3 ♕b6 19 ♘xe6! ♗xe6 20 ♖xe6+! ♕xe6 21 ♖e3 ♕xe3+ 22 ♗xe3, when it was difficult for Black to coordinate his scattered forces.

16...e5?!, as occurred in the game Martinovic-Rajkovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1975, looks highly suspect. White should have replied either 17 b4 ♕b6 18 ♗d8! ♕xd8 19 ♖xe5+! ♗e7 20 ♘c7 + ♔f8 21 ♘de6+ fxe6 22 ♘xe6+ ♔g8 23 ♕g3 ♕f8 24 ♖f5, or, according to analysis by Honfi, 17 ♖xe5+!? ♘xe5 18 ♘b3 ♕b6 19 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 20 ♗xd8 ♘a6 21 ♘a5.

17 ♔b1 ♗d5 (17...♖a5 is bad on account of 18 ♕f4! ♖xb5 19 ♘xb5 ♕xb5 20 ♕xb8+). Formerly this position was considered favourable for Black, but the game Velikovic-Sahovic (Yugoslavia 1973) appeared to shake this opinion: 18 ♖d3 (with the threat of 19 ♖c3 and 20 ♖c8 mate) 18...♕b6 19 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 20 ♕c4, and wins. I myself do not find this game convincing, if only because of 19...♖xb2+! 20 ♔xb2 (bad is 20 ♔c1 fxe6! 21 ♖xd5 ♖xb5) 20...♕xb5+ 21 ♖b3 ♕xb3+! 22 cxb3 fxe6, and with the resulting material balance I would prefer to play Black.

C. Also possible on the 16th move is 16 ♘dxb5, which has caused Black considerable trouble: 16...♘a6 17 ♕f4 (on 17 ♗f4 Black again replies 17...♗c6) 17...♗c6, and in the game Lukovnikov-Manukovsky, Voronezh 1971, after 18 b4 ♕xb4 19 ♖d4 ♕a5 20 ♖a4 ♕b6 21 ♖xa6! and 22 ♘c7+ White achieved his goal.

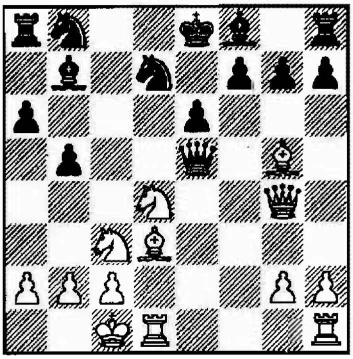
But Black could have played 19...♕c5! (the immediate queen sacrifice 19...♕xb5 20 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 runs up against a strong reply in 21 ♕f3!; White threatens 22 a4, and Black loses after 21...♘b6 22 ♕xa8+, or 21...♘c7 22 ♕b7, while on 21...♖c8 there follows 22 ♕b7 ♖b8 23 ♖xd7 ♗a3+ 24 ♔d1 0-0 25 ♕f3) 20 ♖c4 (20 ♖d6 e5), and only now sacrificed his queen – 20...♕xb5! 21 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 22 ♕f3 ♖b8 23 ♖f4 ♘b4 (23...♘f6 24 ♖xf6) 24 ♖xf7 ♘xa2+ 25 ♔d1 ♗c4. In this complex position, which can hardly be subjected to exact analysis, Black appears to have dangerous threats.

It seemed that all the possibilities for White had been studied, but a game Berezyuk-Izhnin, played in the 1976 USSR School Children's Spartakiad, added a fresh portion of fuel to the fire. In it White played 14 ♘cxb5 immediately (instead of 14 ♖he1), and with a cascade of sacrifices mated his opponent: 14...h5 15 ♘c7+! ♕xc7 16 ♘xe6 ♕e5 17 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 18 ♕e2+.

Certain experts saw in this innovation the refutation of 12...♕xe5, but such a conclusion was clearly over-hasty. The cause of Black's crushing defeat was the erroneous move 14...h5? If he plays 14...f5 (D. Minic recommends 14...♗e7, with an unclear position) it is not clear whether White's initiative compensates for his material deficit. Thus on 15 ♕h3 Black has an adequate reply in 15...♔f7 16 ♖he1 ♗e4, while in the event of 15 ♘xf5 exf5 16 ♕c4 ♘a6 17 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 18 ♖d1+ ♔e8 he beats off the attack.

On the basis of this variation it would wrong to assert that 13 ♗xb5 is premature, since there are still many secrets concealed in this sharp position. For example, more recently the English player Michael Forster found a significant improvement in this last line for White: instead of 17 ♖xd7 he suggests 17 ♖he1 ♗e4 18 ♖d5!, and despite Black's great material advantage, his position gives serious cause for alarm (18...♕e6 19 ♘d4). Further research is required to give a definitive diagnosis of 13 ♗xb5.

However, White has at his disposal another dangerous, although apparently less energetic move: 13 ♗d3!?



It is this move that enables White to utilise most favourably his attacking possibilities. While completing the mobilisation of his forces, White as it were asks his opponent: 'Well now, can you do the same?' Meanwhile the familiar attack on e6 is on the agenda after 14 ♖he1, and it is obvious that Black has no time for quiet development.

Since this book is not only about The Variation, but also about the search for the truth in it, I should mention that earlier, in 1961, the move 13 ♗d3 did not appear dangerous to me. Black has 13...♘f6, when, I decided, he can survive. And it was only on returning to The Variation that I realised that it was here that the most severe tests awaited Black, tests that at times have appeared virtually insoluble...

13...♘f6

One gains the impression that this is the only move. 14 ♖he1 is threatened, and it is essential to disturb the co-ordinated attack of the white pieces on e6. To this end

13...h5? does not work; in the game Sax-Bielczyk, Poland 1969, there followed 14 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 15 ♘xe6, and White re-established material equality with a winning position, since if 15...fxe6?? he gives a 'linear' mate with his two bishops by 16 ♗g6.

14 ♗xf6!

In 1961-2 a correspondence match was held between the Ukraine and France. In one of the games Roos played against Sakharov 14 ♕h4 ♘bd7 15 ♖he1 ♕c5 16 ♗f5 (increasing to the maximum the pressure on e6) 16...0-0-0!, and Black managed to beat off the attack, retain a material advantage, and win. On the basis of this game the whole line with 13 ♗d3 was considered inadequate.

But then in 1969, in his game with Anikayev from the USSR Championship Semi-Final in Kiev, Tukmakov exchanged on f6, not begrudging his strong bishop for the sake of maintaining the tempo of the attack.

Now on 14...♕xf6 White replies 15 ♖he1, and the sacrifice on e6 takes place under highly favourable conditions. E.g. 15...h5 16 ♘xe6!! hxg4 17 ♗xb5+! ♔e7 (on 17...axb5 White gives mate by 18 ♘c7) 18 ♘xf8+ ♕e6 (not 18...♔xf8 19 ♖e8 mate) 19 ♘xe6 fxe6 20 ♗c4, and White is material up with a won position (Welling-Lindblom, Gausdal 1971).

14...gxf6

Now the threat of 15...♕g5+, with the exchange of queens, does not allow White time for ♖he1. But in his arsenal he has what is virtually his main weapon in this variation – interference.

15 ♗f5!

There can be no doubt that this quintessence of the whole 13 ♗d3 line was found by Tukmakov in his preparations, and was merely 'published' in the afore-mentioned game with Anikayev.

Now Black is lost after 15...♕e3+ 16 ♔b1 h5 17 ♘xe6!!, when on 17...hxg4 there follows 18 ♘c7+ ♔e7 19 ♘7d5+, regaining the queen with a big advantage, while if 17...♕xe6 (S.Kogan-Kotenko, USSR Correspondence Championship 1970-3), then 18 ♕d4 ♘c6 (the only defence against mate) 19 ♕d7+! ♕xd7 20 ♗xd7+ ♔d8 (20...♔e7 fails to 21 ♗xc6, with the threat of 22 ♖he1+ and mate) 21 ♗xc6+ ♔c7 22 ♗xb7 ♔xb7 23 ♖d7+, when White has a won ending.

Black is similarly defenceless after 15... exf5 16 ♘xf5, when the threat of ♖he1 cannot be met, while on 15...♗h6+ Tukmakov gives the following variation: 16 ♔b1 ♕f4 17 ♘xe6! (for the umpteenth time!) 17...♕xg4 (if the sacrifice is accepted – 17... fxe6, then 18 ♕h5+ ♔e7 19 ♗xe6 ♖f8 20 ♖he1, and all the same the black king cannot escape) 18 ♘c7+ ♔f8 19 ♗xg4 ♖a7 20 ♖d8+ ♔g7 21 ♘e8+, winning material.

Therefore Anikayev found what is probably the strongest defence.

15...h5

Now the sacrifice on e6 is not possible: 16 ♘xe6? hxg4, and the c7 square is defended.

16 ♕h3 ♗c5 17 ♖he1 ♕f4+ 18 ♔b1 ♗xd4

So as to at least learn the worst...

19 ♗xe6! ♗xc3

Black rids himself of one potential white attacker.

This would appear to be necessary, since on the immediate 19...fxe6 there follows 20 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 21 ♕e8+ ♔g7 22 ♖e7+, and if 19...♗e5 20 ♘d5 ♕g5 (equally bad is 20... ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♖a7 22 ♕c8+) 21 ♕a3! ♘c6 (White concludes the game elegantly after 21...♗xd5 22 ♗xd5 ♖a7 23 ♕d6 ♘d7 24 ♗c6 ♕f5 25 ♕b8+) 22 ♘c7+ ♗xc7 23 ♗d7+ ♔d8 24 ♗f5+, announcing mate in three.

I should mention that all these variations are given by Tukmakov, and that in the attack which began back on the 14th move the white pieces develop tremendous energy.

20 bxc3 0-0

But here White went wrong. He played the natural move 21 ♖d4, including his rook in the attack, but after 21...♕g5 22 ♖e3 ♗xg2 Black managed to beat it off. As Tukmakov himself later pointed out, he could have won here by either 21 ♖e3, or the even stronger 21 ♗xf7+!, which wins by force:

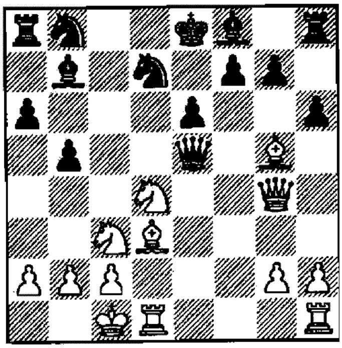
On 21...♔xf7 White quickly reaches his goal: 22 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 23 ♕g6+ ♔h8 24 ♖e7, and there is no defence against the mate.

The black king has a slightly longer life after 21...♖xf7, but here again after 22 ♖e8+ ♔g7 (if 22...♖f8, then 23 ♕e6+ ♔g7 24 ♖xf8 ♔xf8 25 ♖d8+ ♔g7 26 ♖g8+ ♔h6 27 ♕f7, mating) 23 ♖dd8, despite being two pieces down, White's attack concludes successfully: 23...♘c6 (there is nothing more sensible; on 23...♗e4 White can play, for instance, 24 ♕xh5 ♗h7 25 ♖h8 ♕f5 26 ♖dg8+ ♗xg8 27 ♕h6 mate) 24 ♖g8+ ♔h6 25 ♖h8+ ♖h7 26 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 27 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 28 ♖d7+, and mates.

Had this occurred, Tukmakov's excellent preparation would have received an adequate and worthy reward.

I have to admit that my attempts to find a 'hole' in White's plan were unsuccessful, and however much I tried to deviate after 14 ♗xf6, nothing real came of it.

It turned out that an improvement had to be sought earlier, immediately in reply to 13 ♗d3, and Albin Planinc succeeded in doing this in a game with Mestrovic. On the 13th move he introduced an important improvement, choosing, instead of 13...♘f6, which is apparently the only reasonable move, 13...h6!

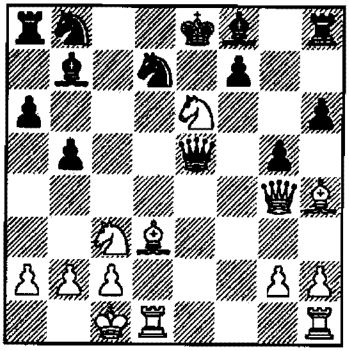


Mestrovic attempted to refute the innovation by the standard sacrifice 14 ♘xe6, but after 14...hxg5 15 ♖de1 (if 15 ♖he1, then 15...♖h4!, and the white queen is trapped; the game Winston-Dieks, World Junior Championship, Manila 1974, continued for a few moves more: 16 ♕xh4 gxh4 17 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♘c7+ ♔e7 19 ♘xa8 ♗xa8, and Black easily realised his advantage; in the event of 16 ♘c7+ ♔d8 17 ♖xe5 ♖xg4 18 ♘xa8 ♗xa8 White again stands badly) 15...♖h4 16 ♕d1 fxe6 17 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 Black had nothing to worry about. The game continued 18 ♕e2 ♘bd7 19 ♗e4 0-0-0 20 g3 ♖xe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘f6 22 ♘xg5 ♗xh1, and after a lively battle it ended in a draw, although I consider that in the position after his 17th move Black could have hoped for more.

Thus White's cavalry attack proved unconvincing, and what's more, in this game the main idea behind Planinc's innovation did not see the light of day. This happened later, in several games from the years 1972 and 1973, when White made what is undoubtedly the strongest move.

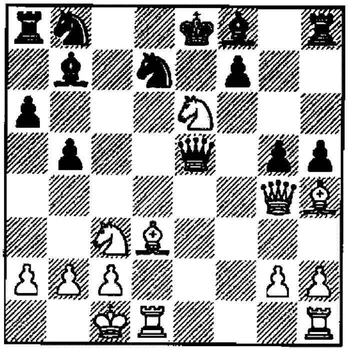
14 ♗h4 g5!

It suddenly turns out that the menacing white queen is short of squares after both 15 ♗g3 ♕e3+ 16 ♔b1 h5, and 15 ♖he1 h5! White is therefore forced into a tactical mêlée.



A cursory glance at the position is sufficient to create the impression that, although White has two pieces *en prise*, the black king is bound to perish very shortly. Its fate hangs by a thread, but unexpectedly this thread proves to be made of highly durable material.

15...h5!!



A most unusual position, in which the main *dramatis personae* of both sides are under attack. Three white pieces are simultaneously attacked by pawns, and if on the previous move Black had decided to 'treat himself' to the knight or the bishop, he would have lost immediately on account of the catastrophe on the e-file.

Here in the game Luczak-Schmidt (Polish Team Championship, 1973) White played 16 ♕h3, and after 16...fxe6 17 ♖he1 ♕f4+ 18 ♔b1 gxh4 19 ♕xe6+ the resulting complications were difficult to assess.

However, in my opinion this continuation is by no means obligatory for Black. He should have continued playing in the same manner, and instead of capturing pieces should have created threats. Highly suitable to this end is 16...♗h6!

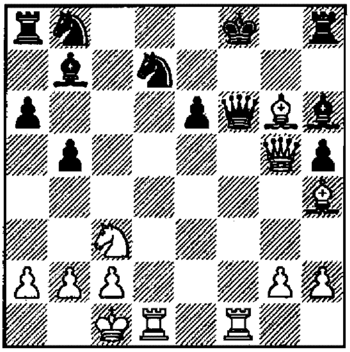
The immediate 16...g4 does not work, in view of 17 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 18 ♖he1+, with very dangerous threats, such as 18...♘e5 19 ♖xe5+! ♕xe5 20 ♗xb5+ axb5 21 ♖d8 mate. Of course, in this line Black could have avoided mate, but White obtains a very strong attack.

But now (after 16...♗h6!) the ...g5g4 advance becomes highly unpleasant for White, since his queen is threatened, while the black king obtains a saving escape square at f8. White no longer has time for 17 ♖he1, and Black, in my opinion, can feel perfectly content.

Thus on 17 ♗xg5 he replies simply 17...♗xg5+ (and if 18 ♘xg5, then 18...♕xg5+ 19 ♔b1 and possibly even 19...0-0, as it were leaving the capture on g2 in reserve, while after 18 ♔b1 he has 18...fxe6! 19 ♖he1 ♔e7! 20 ♖xe5 ♘xe5, and, firstly, Black has a lot of pieces, and secondly, they are very harmoniously placed, particularly after ...♘d7). In the event of 17 ♔b1 Black again wins an important tempo for the evacuation of his king, and can continue 17...g4 18 ♘c7+ ♔f8 or 18...♕xc7.

It seems fairly certain that, by retreating his queen to h3 on move 16, White loses the initiative. For this reason 16 ♕xg5 has been tried in other games. After this, against Dueball (Skopje Olympiad 1972) Kerr continued 16...♗h6, and on 17 ♖he1 – 17...fxe6! (17...♕xe1 is dangerous on account of 18 ♖xe1 ♗xg5+ 19 ♘xg5+, when for the exchange White has a pawn, two strong bishops, and even without the queens his attack persists) 18 ♗g6+ ♔f8 19 ♖f1+ ♔g8

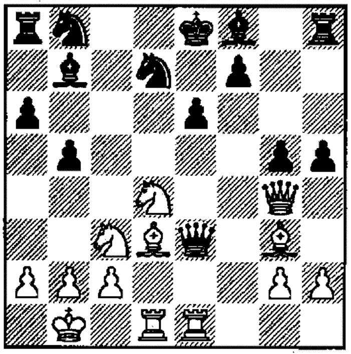
(Black cannot play either 19...♘f6 20 ♕xh6+ ♖xh6 21 ♗xf6 ♕e3+ 22 ♔b1, with advantage to White, since the threats of 23 ♖d8 mate and 23 ♗d4+ cannot both be parried, or 19...♔g7 20 ♖f7+ ♔g8 21 ♗h7+!, with a very strong attack), and White forced perpetual check – 20 ♗f7+ ♔h7 21 ♗g6+ ♔g8 etc. However, after 19 ♖f1+ Boleslavsky and Kapengut then found an amazingly beautiful move – 19...♕f6!!



Now Black wins: 20 ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 21 ♖d8+ ♔g7 22 ♖xh8 ♗xg5+ 23 ♗xg5 ♔xg6, and he comes out a piece ahead.

In the game Ljubojevic-Mariotti, Manila 1976, after a slightly different move order – 14...g5 15 ♖de1 h5! 16 ♕xg5 ♗h6 17 ♘xe6 – a position from the Kerr-Dueball game was reached, with the difference that White's queen's rook was at e1; this is of no great significance. By continuing 17...fxe6! (instead of 17...♗xg5) 18 ♗g6+ ♔f8 19 ♖hf1+ ♕f6! Black could have gained the advantage. Minic has suggested 20 ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 21 ♖xe6 ♘bd7 22 ♘e2, supposedly leading to an unclear position, but it is difficult to agree with this. Thus Black appears to have a good continuation in 22...♖c8 (instead of 22...♗xg5, as suggested by Minic) 23 ♘f4 ♗xg5 24 ♗xg5 ♖c6 25 ♖e1 ♖d6 26 ♗f5 ♖g8.

But following the discovery of 19...♕f6!! the arguments around Planinc's continuation did not cease, and soon a game was played that added much fuel to the fire. In a 1973 Soviet tournament, after 13...h6 14 ♗h4 g5 Litvinov chose against Zarenkov the seemingly impossible 15 ♗g3, and in reply to 15...♕e3+ 16 ♔b1 h5 – 17 ♖he1! Attack for attack! Blow for blow!



Naturally, Black attempted to win material – 17...♕xe1, but 18 ♕xg5 ♗h6 19 ♕xh5 ♕e3 20 ♘xe6!! presented him with difficult problems. He chose 20...♕xe6, since the threats of ♘c7+ and ♖e1 demand a clarification of the situation, and on 21 ♖e1 – 21...♕xe1+ 22 ♗xe1 ♗g7!, attacking the queen and consolidating his forces. But in reply to 23 ♕g4 he went wrong with 23...0-0? Black assumed that everything was in order, and that after the completion of his queenside development his material advantage should tell, but 24 ♕h4! reminded him that the middlegame and White's attack were still in progress. Better, according to Boleslavsky and Kapengut, whose opinion I fully share, is 23...♔f8, when a highly complicated position is reached. For example, 24 ♘e4 ♖h6 25 ♗b4+ ♔g8 26 ♗c3 ♖g6, Lanka-Feldman, corr. 1975-7.

But besides 19 ♕xh5 White has another interesting possibility: 19 ♕h4! Having adopted it in a correspondence game, M. Rudnev considers this move to be stronger than the capture of the pawn. After 19...♕e3 20 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 (Black loses after 20...fxe6 21 ♗g6+ ♔f8 22 ♖f1+ ♔g8 23 ♕e7) 21 ♖e1 ♕xe1+ 22 ♗xe1 a position is reached where, in comparison with the previous game, the white queen is better placed. Which is more important: Black's material advantage, or White's initiative? It is highly possible that the fate of this whole scheme of play depends upon the answer to this question.

The reader will no doubt already have noticed that, in this line, the play of the two sides proceeds as if according to the principle of constant counter-blows. 'What happens if one tries at some point to deviate from this exchange of blows?,' I thought to myself one day, and soon discovered that a convenient moment for this did exist. In reply to Litvinov's innovation of 17 ♖he1, Black can calmly play 17...hxg4 18 ♖xe3 ♘c5!, if possible exchanging off White's light-square bishop, or, if it should retreat, say, to e2, then preparing the counter-blow 19...b4.

If, in addition, account is taken of the fact that Black has an extra pawn and is threatening to complete his queenside development, it is clear that any delay by White will be equivalent to suicide. And in fact he has a piece sacrifice, leading to a highly unclear position; but if he plays the routine 19 ♗xb5+ axb5 20 ♘dxb5, then 20...♘ba6, and how White can develop his initiative is not apparent. There remains 19 ♘cxb5 axb5 20 ♗xb5+ ♘bd7 21 b4 0-0-0 (dangerous is 21...♘e4 22 ♘xe6 fxe6 23 ♖xd7, with an attack) 22 bxc5 ♘xc5, and at first sight Black's kingside pawn phalanx appears more attractive than White's three pawn islands. On the other hand, White's pieces are much more active; but, I repeat, the position is highly unclear.

These games shed new light on the system of play proposed by Simagin. Black, although forced to balance on the edge of the precipice, appeared able to hold on, and one gained the impression that it was now White's turn to come up with something new. Of course, this could well happen: the positions arising were so sharp and complicated, so rich in double-edged possibilities for both sides, that improvements for White were perfectly possible. As, however, were further improvements for Black.

And the first signs appeared at the 1976 Interzonal Tournament in Manila, where the Soviet grandmaster Yuri Balashov employed an innovation in his game against the Argentinean Quinteros, playing 13 ♗e2! The idea of the move is to avoid blocking the d-file, and to counter Black's plan of 13...h6, on which there would now follow 14 ♗f4 (after 13 ♗d3 this is not possible, since the knight at d4 is undefended). In addition, White plans the exchange of bishops, after, for instance, 13...b4 – 14 ♗f3.

The attempt by Quinteros to play actively proved unsuccessful: 13...h5 14 ♕h4 f6 15 ♗f4 g5 16 ♕xh5+! ♖xh5 17 ♗xh5+ ♔e7 18 ♗xe5, and it is unlikely that anyone will wish to play this position again.

A little later, in the game Balinas-Tarjan, Odessa 1976, Black defended differently, but again unsuccessfully: 13...♘f6 14 ♗xf6! gxf6 (after 14...♕xf6 15 ♘cxb5! axb5 16 ♗xb5+ ♔e7 17 ♕g3! White wins, Sakharov-Feldman, corr. 1977) 15 ♖he1 ♕g5+ (or 15...h5 16 ♕h3 ♕g5+ 17 ♔b1 ♗xg2 18 ♗xb5+ axb5 19 ♘xe6!, and things are bad for Black) 16 ♕xg5 fxg5 17 ♗h5 ♔e7 18 ♖f1 f5 (or 18...f6 19 ♘f5+! exf5 20 ♖fe1+, and wins) 19 ♖fe1 ♗xg2 20 ♖xe6+, and White soon won.

But Black, in his turn, was not long in replying. In the 1977 England-Iceland Telechess Match, Sigurjonsson employed an interesting improvement against Stean: 13...♗c5! The game continued 14 ♗f3 (on 14 ♖he1 Black would have replied as in the game) 14...♗xd4! 15 ♗xb7 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 (16 ♗xa8 ♗xb2+ is clearly advantageous for Black) 16...♖a7 17 ♖he1 h5! 18 ♕h4 (18 ♖xe5 hxg4 19 ♖c5 0-0 20 ♖c7 ♘c5 21 ♖xc5 ♖xb7 is unacceptable for White) 18... ♕xc3 19 ♖e3 ♕a1+ 20 ♔a2 ♕xa2 21 ♕b4 f6 22 ♕d6 ♖xb7, and Black successfully passed the examination.

Instead of 14 ♗f3, White has a rather threatening alternative in 14 ♘f3!? After 14...h5! 15 ♕h4 ♗e3+ 16 ♔b1 ♗xf3 17 ♗xe3 ♗xe2 18 ♗d4 ♕f5 19 ♘xe2 a complicated position is reached, where he has definite compensation for the pawn (Bryson-Gallagher, Nottingham 1987).

But perhaps the most dangerous for Black is 14 ♖hf1!, immediately exploiting the f-file. There can follow 14...♗xd4 (14... 0-0 15 ♗f4 and 14...f5 15 ♘xf5 exf5 16 ♖xf5 are both bad for Black) 15 ♖xd4 0-0 (15...h5 16 ♕h4 f6 17 ♗d2 followed by 18 ♖e1, and White has the initiative, or 15... ♘c6 16 ♖xd7!) 16 ♖d3 f5 17 ♕h4 b4 18 ♕xb4 ♗xg2 19 ♖g1 ♗e4 20 ♘xe4 fxe4 21 ♖dg3 ♘c6 22 ♕b7! with advantage to White, Westerinen-Sigurjonsson, New York 1977.

But in Timman-van der Vliet, Holland 1978, Black introduced the improvement 15...f6! (before castling it is important to drive back the white bishop from its active position) 16 ♗h4 0-0 17 ♖fd1 ♕e3+ 18 ♔b1 f5 19 ♕h5 g6, and gained an advantage. Of course, 16 ♗d2 f5 17 ♕h4 was better, when 17...0-0 18 ♖d3 ♕f6 19 ♗g5 ♕f7 leads to a situation with chances for both sides, where Black's position, although passive, is sufficiently solid.

Thus, at the cost of incredible efforts, Black has succeeded (it would seem!) in holding White's powerful onslaught in the variation 12 ♕g4 ♕xe5.

Finally, only one conclusion can be drawn: the wealth of ideas and the number of variations here is so great, that all lovers of so-called 'fighting play' will always be able to find in The Variation a boundless and fruitful field for exploration, experimentation and discovery.

THE SECOND RE-BIRTH

It appeared that The Variation was continuing to 'breath'. But could I be satisfied with such a life? Even a brief glance at the positions arising after 12 ♕g4 is sufficient to understand what 'madness' is happening on the board. When the degree of risk has already exceeded all permitted limits, and when every day of the given scheme's existence threatens to become its last. Besides, apart from 12 ♕g4, the knight sacrifice 12 ♘xe6 left Black with hopes only of a draw, even given the best defence. It has to be agreed that this does nothing to raise one's spirits.

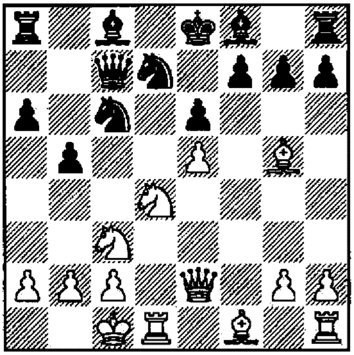
No! Either some kind of normal defence had to be found instead of this 'merry-go-round', where it was not possible to calculate everything, or... even the most blind attachment to The Variation would have to give way to reason. The thought again began occurring to me: 'Is it not time?', a thought which I had already nurtured once in the past. And, as if preparing for this difficult ordeal, I began employing my brainchild increasingly rarely in tournaments, usually replacing it with the Paulsen and Scheveningen Variations. Only occasionally did I 'fire' my old weapon, as, for example, in my game with Olafsson at Reykjavik in 1978.

My very being opposed in every way the acceptance of this option: I could not concede that such an illogical move as 10 ♕e2, which breaks the principles of chess, by blocking the bishop and hindering the occupation of the e-file by a rook, could be the "Achilles' heel" of The Variation. But does not my Variation break (to even a slight extent!) these principles! Is it not an exception to the rules? I realised perfectly well that, when discussing The Variation, one should not appeal to **logic**!

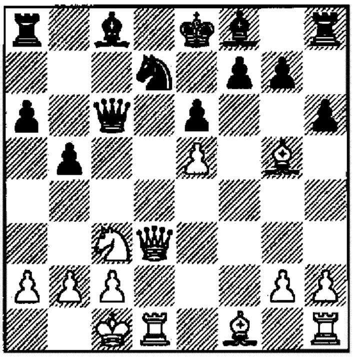
In the late 1970s there was increasing talk about the burying of The Variation. I could not endure this any longer; it was time to take a final decision. Early in 1979 I decided to sacrifice one more month of work, in order to put an end to my wavering and to answer the question: 'To be or not to be?' This was the year of the Interzonal Tournament for the World Championship, and long before it I began refining my opening repertoire.

Is there an antidote to Simagin's idea? On this depended the fate of my Variation, 'my', and no one else's, since I no longer had any wish to delve into the jungle with 12 ♕g4 and 12 ♘xe6.

For the umpteenth time I began sorting through the various moves. What about 'reviving the good old days' – was everything clear in the variation with 11...♘c6 ?



I had to stir up the past. Studying anew Ravinsky's idea of 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♕d3, I clearly established the main cause of Black's misfortunes. He is unable safely to win the e5 pawn, for two reasons: (1) the threat of mate on the d-file, on which White is ready to double his rooks, and (2) the pin on the h2-b8 diagonal, since the white queen will be very unpleasantly placed on g3. It was these thoughts that in the end suggested to me the idea of **13...h6!**, this pawn advance proving to be the key to the solution.



Why did it not occur to anyone, and for a long time to me, to make this basically simple move, one which constantly features in The Variation? Black had been let down by his 'mechanical' thinking: he had automatically considered the move order 14 ♗e2 ♗b7 15 ♗f3 ♕c7 16 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 17 ♗h4, when his position gives little cause for happiness, since his king is hopelessly stuck in the centre.

But in fact Black had missed one exceptionally important detail: it turns out that he can stop half-way and... sacrifice the rook at a8, i.e. 14...hxg5!?! 15 ♗f3 ♕c7 16 ♗xa8 ♘xe5 17 ♕g3 f6.

The initial impression was that Black has a pawn for the exchange, two active bishops, plus a powerful group of pawns in the centre, where the 4-2 ratio in his favour promises to be of great value in the future. In addition, White cannot strike with 18 h4 in view of 18...gxh4 19 ♖xh4 ♘d3+!, and this means that Black has additional time for the consolidation of his forces. On top of everything, White has to reckon with the manoeuvre ...♕a7.

Clearly, these general considerations required checking, but the unexpectedly found innovation immediately won me over. I was heartened by the fact that it was not accompanied by wild complications and a mass of concrete possibilities.

This exchange sacrifice was tested in the game Yudasin-Oll (USSR 1989), which went 18 ♔b1 (now threatening 19 h4), and after 18...♖h4 19 ♗f3 White gained the advantage.

But Black is by no means obliged to play this way. He has 18...♗d6, and if 19 ♘e4 ♗e7, after which White faces the threat of 20...♕a7. As yet there is very little experience on which to draw any conclusions. But to me personally, Black's position appears quite promising.

Of course, White is not obliged to go in for the above continuation, and can retreat his bishop with 14 ♗h4, but then the other spring goes into operation: 14...♗b7 15 ♗e2 ♕c7, when Black threatens (after, for example, 16 ♖d2) 16...♘xe5 17 ♕g3 g5, when the white bishop is lost. This was why 13...h6! was required.

Involuntarily I became the witness of a genuine *perestroika*! There, where until very recently everything had been shrouded in gloom, suddenly the sun had begun to shine.

Indeed, for the umpteenth time the modest advance of the h-pawn on the thirteenth(!) move had rescued me. Remember the games with Nezhmetdinov (p.41) and Kavalek (p.88), and now once again 13...h6. What a pity that prizes are not awarded in chess for individual moves!

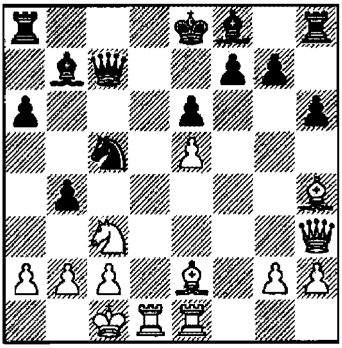
My analysis did not lie idle for long. The same year, at the 1979 Interzonal Tournament in Riga, its baptism of fire took place in the game **Grünfeld-Polugayevsky**, which continued:

14 ♗h4 ♗b7 15 ♗e2 ♕c7 16 ♖he1

Defending the central pawn. Now Black cannot play 16...♘xe5, on account of 17 ♕g3 g5 18 ♗xb5+ axb5 19 ♘xb5. But the development of the rook at e1 does not in itself create any particular difficulties for Black, and he has time to take countermeasures.

16...♘c5 17 ♕h3 b4!?

It would perhaps have been more prudent to choose the less risky 17...♖c8, but I felt an inclination to go in for complications. Especially since at the board I had found a totally unexpected move, which would set White incredibly difficult problems. No, of course, my opponent's position cannot be considered bad or even inferior: after all, White has not done anything 'unlawful'. It was simply that the resulting situation gave great scope to imagination, demanded deep, exact and lengthy calculation, and I was hoping for success.



18 ♘b5!

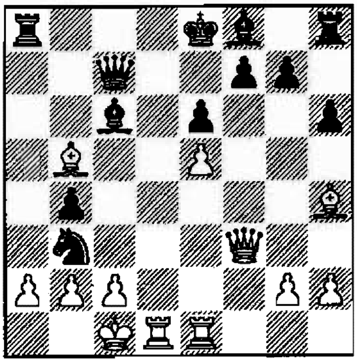
White accepts the challenge, one which, moreover, he is unable to decline. 18 ♘b1 gives Black the initiative, while the 'attacking' 18 ♘a4 simply loses to 18...♘xa4 19 ♕xe6+ fxe6 20 ♗h5+ ♕f7 21 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♖d7+ ♔g6 23 ♖xb7 ♗c5, when for the piece White has no compensation.

But now it appears that things are bad for Black, and that he must reconcile himself to a clearly inferior position after 18...♕a5 19 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 20 exd6, since 18...axb5 19 ♗xb5+ ♗c6 20 ♕f3! leads to mate after 20...♗xb5 21 ♕xa8+, or 20...♖c8 21 ♗xc6+ ♕xc6 22 ♕xc6+ ♖xc6 23 ♖d8.

But after checking the variations once again, Black nevertheless followed the second, 'ruinous' path.

18...axb5! 19 ♗xb5+ ♗c6 20 ♕f3 ♘b3+!!

This fine intermediate move into a triple attack was planned by Black when he made his 17th move. It came as a complete surprise to Grünfeld, who, in spite of prolonged thought, promptly committed the decisive mistake.



21 ♔b1?

This loses and... leaves behind the scenes a mass of interesting variations, which I had been considering for roughly an hour.

It stands to reason that neither 21 ♕xb3? ♗xb5, nor 21 cxb3 ♗xb5+ is playable. Therefore, by the method of elimination, White was bound to choose 21 axb3!, when my calculation continued 21...♖a1+ 22 ♔d2 ♕d7+ 23 ♔e3! (not 23 ♔e2 ♗xb5+) 23...♗c5+ 24 ♔f4 g5+ 25 ♔g3! ♖xd1! (if 25...gxh4+? 26 ♔h3! ♖xd1 27 ♗xc6! ♖xe1 28 ♗xd7+, and White has the advantage wherever the king moves: 28...♔xd7 29 ♕b7+ and 30 ♕b8+, or 28...♔e7 29 ♕f6+, or 28...♔f8 29 ♕f6 ♖h7 30 ♗xe6), and since after 26 ♖xd1?! gxh4+ 27 ♔h3 ♗xf3 28 ♖xd7 ♗e2! 29 ♖b7+ ♗xb5 30 ♖b8+ ♔e7 31 ♖xh8 ♗d4 things are bad for White, he has to choose between capturing on c6 with queen or bishop:

A. 26 ♕xc6 ♖d3+! 27 cxd3 gxh4+ 28 ♔xh4 ♕xc6 29 ♗xc6+ ♔e7, and White is two pawns up, but his pawn formation is irreparably spoiled, and the opposite-colour bishops guarantee Black a draw.

B. 26 ♗xc6 ♖xe1 27 ♗xd7+ ♔f8 (with the threat of 28...♖e3) 28 ♕f6 ♖e3+ 29 ♔g4 (29 ♔f2? loses to 29...♖xe5+ 30 ♔g3 ♖e3+ 31 ♔f2 ♖e4+ 32 ♔g3 ♗d6+ 33 ♔h3 ♖xh4 mate) 29...♖e4+ 30 ♔h3 ♖xh4+ 31 ♔g3 ♖h7, and both players must be satisfied with a draw.

It is dangerous for White to continue, e.g. 32 ♗xe6, in view of 32...♖f4 33 ♕d8+ ♔g7 34 ♗g4 (the only way of parrying simultaneously the two threats of 34...fxe6 and 34...♗f2+ 35 ♔h3 ♖h4 mate) 34...♖h8! 35 ♕d7 (or d5, d3, d2, d1, c7 or a5) 35...♗f2+ 36 ♔h3 h5, and Black wins.

For Black in turn, after 32 ♕d8+ ♔g7 33 ♕f6+ ♔g8 34 ♕d8+ the attempt by 34...♗f8 to avoid perpetual check is too risky.

Thus the complications provoked by Black, with 'correct play', could have led only to a draw. But what a mockery was made of this term many years ago by Mikhail Chigorin! The resulting position was full of life – and for this reason alone it had every right to exist.

I need hardly remind the reader how difficult it was at the board to calculate all these – and many other – variations, and correctly weigh up the chances of the two sides.

21...♘a5

Now Black keeps his extra piece, although the battle is not yet over.

22 ♖d4!

The best chance, threatening both ♖c4, and the doubling of rooks on the d-file.

22...♖c8! 23 ♖ed1! g5!

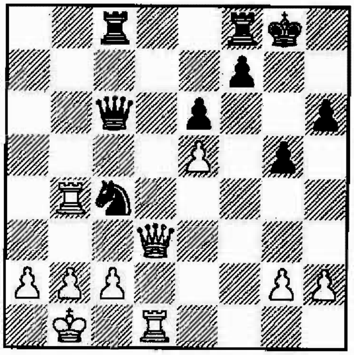
Both sides are accurate in exploiting their chances; it is simply that Black has more of them...

24 ♗xc6+

After 24 ♖d7 ♕xd7 25 ♖xd7 Black wins both by 25...♔xd7 26 ♕xf7+ ♗e7 27 ♗xc6+ ♘xc6, with the threats of 28...gxh4 and 28...♖f8, and by 25...♗xf3 26 ♖c7+ ♗c6 27 ♖xc8+ ♔d7 28 ♖a8 ♗xb5.

24...♕xc6 25 ♕d3 ♗e7 26 ♗e1 0-0 27 ♗xb4 ♗xb4 28 ♖xb4 ♘c4

Here we can take stock, and it is depressing for White. In the middlegame his passed pawns will not go far.



29 b3

A trap in Black's time trouble. If now 29...♘xa3+ 30 ♔b2 ♘xc2 (30...♕xc2+ 31 ♔xa3), then 31 ♖c4. However, it is unlikely that White could have kept his e-pawn.

29...♘xe5 30 ♕e2 ♕c3 31 ♖e4 ♘c6

In time trouble I overlooked the elegant 31...♖fd8!, which after 32 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 33 ♖xe5 ♖d2 34 ♖c5! ♕d4! wins immediately by the threat of 35...♖c1+, and if 35 c3 ♕g1+.

32 ♖d3 ♕a5 33 ♖h3 ♘b4 34 c4 ♖fd8 35 a4

Forced, in view of the threat of 35...♖d1+.

35...♕f5 36 ♖f3 ♕g6 37 ♔b2 ♕g7+ 38 ♔b1 ♖c6?!

With his flag about to fall, Black carries out inexactly a correct plan. Immediately decisive was 38...♖c7 and 39...♖cd7, when the rooks invade.

39 c5!

Now d6 is inaccessible to the rook, and the knight is attacked...

39...♘d5 40 ♖c4 ♘f4 41 ♕b2 ♖d1+

41...♕xb2+ 42 ♔xb2 ♘d3+ and 43...♘e5 would have won easily, but I was vexed, and wanted without fail to conclude the game with an attack on the king.

42 ♔a2 ♕f8 43 ♖fc3 ♕d8 44 ♖c2 ♘d3 45 ♕c3 ♕d5 46 ♔a3 ♘e5

The black pieces have achieved maximum activity, and there is no longer any defence against the numerous threats.

47 ♖b4 ♖d3 48 ♖b8+ ♔g7 49 ♕b4 ♖d1 50 ♔a2 ♖a6!

Threatening 51...♖d4 and 52...♖dxa4+.

51 ♖b6

51 c6, opening the way for the white queen to f8, does not achieve anything, since the black king hides from the checks at h5 or h4, while White's remains undefended. The game could have been prolonged slightly by 51 a5, but even then Black wins by 51...♘c6 52 ♕c3+ e5 53 ♖b5 ♘d4 54 ♖b6 ♖xb6 55 cxb6 ♘xc2.

51...♖d4! 52 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 53 ♖xa6 ♕d3 White resigns

A curious fact: after this game my opponents, as though by agreement, quietened down. Pronouncements about the imminent death of The Variation stopped appearing in the press, and in practice hardly anyone dared to play 10 ♕e2 against me. Only once, many years later, at the tournament in Reykjavik, 1990, De Firmian ventured 10 ♕e2, but after 10...♘fd7 11 0-0-0 ♘c6 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♕d3 h6 14 ♗h4 ♗b7 15 ♗e2 a dispute did not take place, since White offered... a draw!?, admitting that The Variation had not been refuted.

At heart I became calmer, and the feeling of hopelessness about 10 ♕e2 retreated.

But 'my peace was but a dream'†. In

---

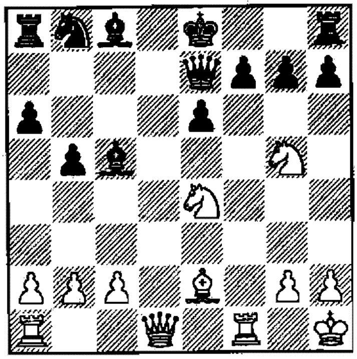
† An adaption of a famous line by Alexander Blok (Translator's note).

1979-80, in other lines, as if from a 'horn of plenty', surprises suddenly rained down on me one after another. True, my character had become sufficiently hardened, and I steadfastly accepted the blows against me.

A frenzied energy had been aroused in me, for some reason I believed with conviction in my exclusive mission: since I had succeeded in finding a defence against Simagin's attack, this meant that I could always and everywhere uphold my Variation!

But let us take things in order.

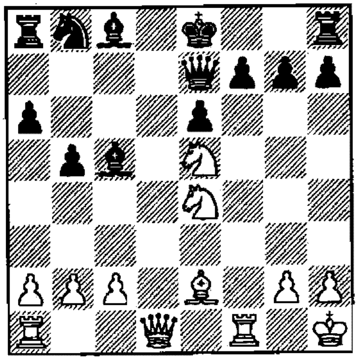
The first surprise was awaiting me at the USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1979, in my game with **Alexander Belyavsky**. Following the usual moves 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7 10 exf6 ♕e5+ 11 ♗e2 ♕xg5 12 0-0 ♕e5 White replied **13 ♘f3**, and after **13...♗c5+ 14 ♔h1 ♕xf6 15 ♘e4 ♕e7 – 16 ♘fg5!?**



Despite profound thought, however, I was unable at the board to resolve the problem. There followed **16...0-0 17 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 18 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 19 ♗h5+ ♔g8** (19...g6 is unsatisfactory, on account of 20 ♘xc5 ♖a7 21 ♘e4 gxh5 22 ♘d6+ and 23 ♘xc8) **20 ♘xc5 ♘d7** (20...♕xc5 loses to 21 ♕d8+ ♕f8 22 ♗f7+!, but 20...♖a7 was the lesser evil) **21 ♘xe6!**, and Black was left a pawn down.

That same evening, on arriving home, I noticed that Black, not fearing ghosts, could have played 16...f5! During the game I saw this move, of course, but rejected it on account of 17 ♗h5+ g6 18 ♘xh7 gxh5 19 ♘ef6+ ♔f7 20 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 21 ♖f3. However, Black overlooked the cool reply 18...♔f7!, when the position of his king proves to be very secure. The white pieces are entangled in the enemy position, and the opening of the h-file favours Black. Plaskett-Gallagher, Telford 1982, went 19 ♘hg5+ ♔g7 20 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 21 ♗f3 ♖a7 with a good game for Black.

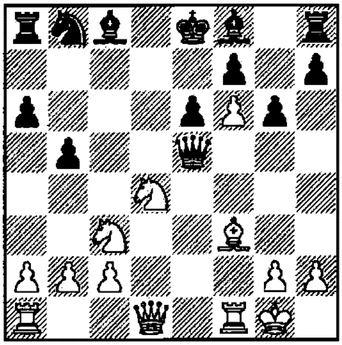
Searches for White after 13 ♘f3 continued, and 16 ♘e5!? was suggested as being strongest. This move turns out to be more dangerous for Black, and he has to defend accurately to avoid getting into difficulties.



Events develop as follows: 16...f5 17 ♗h5+ (the sacrifice 17 ♗xb5+ axb5 18 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 19 ♕h5+ g6 20 ♘xg6 hxg6 21 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 gives White only a draw, while if 21 ♕xh8+ Black has both 21...♕f8 22 ♕e5 ♗d7, and 21...♔f7) 17...g6 18 ♘xg6 hxg6 19 ♗xg6+ ♔f8 20 ♘xc5, when Black has the consolidating 20...♖h6 (not 20...♕xc5 in view of 21 ♕d8+ ♔g7 22 ♕g5, while 20...♔g7 21 ♘xe6+ ♗xe6 22 ♗xf5 also loses time) 21 ♘xe6+ ♗xe6 22 ♗xf5 ♗f7! 23 ♕f3 ♘c6 24 ♗e4 ♘e5, and Black's chances would appear to be no worse, A.Diaz-Vera, Havana 1986.

Apart from 13 ♘f3 there was another

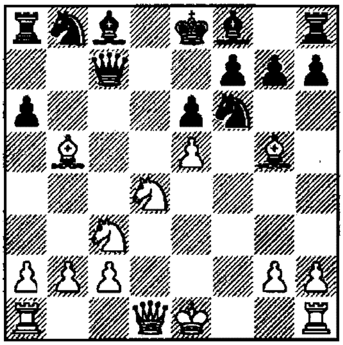
surprise awaiting me in this line: at the international tournament in Bugojno, 1980, **Ljubomir Kavalek** employed against me the seemingly paradoxical **13 ♗h5**, and only after **13...g6** (incidentally, the consequences of 13...♖a7!? are by no means clear) he returned the bishop to the main diagonal: **14 ♗f3**.



The idea of White's manoeuvre is to retain his pawn outpost at f6, and, after Black's planned kingside castling, to possibly threaten him with no less than mate at g7. True, it also has advantages for Black: he no longer has to reckon with the capture fxg7, breaking up his king's pawn cover.

This game failed to answer the question as to who's advantages are the more important. After **14...♖a7 15 ♘e4 ♖d7 16 c3 ♗b7 17 ♘g3** (17 ♘f2 possible deserves consideration, but then in some cases Black can build up an attack on h2 by 17...♗d6) **17...♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♗c5 19 ♔h1** (the best move!) **19...♗xd4 20 cxd4 ♖xd4 21 ♖ae1 ♕d5** the players agreed to a **draw**, since the game was played in the last round, and each was satisfied with half a point. Subsequent analysis showed that for the pawn White has certain compensation, and that in this very sharp position the chances are roughly equal. So that Kavalek's idea can serve as a theme both for theoretical searchings, and for testing in practice.

A little later, in our Quarter-Final Candidates Match in Alma-Ata, ex-World Champion **Mikhail Tal** made a direct attempt to refute The Variation. In just the second game of the match, i.e. the first in which he had White, after the initial moves 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7 there followed **10 ♗xb5+**, which came as a complete surprise to me.



I must confess that, when I was earlier working on The Variation, I had regarded this continuation as sheer folly, and had never made a special examination of it. And suddenly – this innovation, and moreover, in a highly important encounter! Incidentally, Tal later said that the idea belonged to his second, the Latvian master Vitolinsh.

The game continued **10...axb5 11 exf6 ♕e5+ 12 ♕e2 ♕xg5 13 ♘dxb5**, when I become absorbed in thoughts of a highly serious and not altogether pleasant nature (at the board who likes having to try and refute a prepared variation by the opponent?). Much time was spent on them, but on the other hand the very strong move **13...♖a5** was found. Black removes his rook from the knight fork at c7, and in some variations threatens to bring it into play along the fifth rank. At the same time, he threatens to increase the pressure on the attacking white knight at b5.

It was now White's turn to be faced with the question: what to do next? He cannot strengthen his attack by 14 ♖d1, as the simple 14...♗d7 follows. And he decided to bring his knight at c3 into play, after first weakening the d6 square by **14 fxg7**.

At the board Black reconciled himself to this and replied **14...♗xg7**, but I think that 14...♕xg7 was also not at all bad, maintaining control of d6. Of course, in this case 15 0-0-0 would have given White certain practical chances, but they are clearly insufficient to refute The Variation. So that Tal's innovation was clearly intended for 'one-off' use, and it is significant that in his next 'White' game in the match he did not repeat it.

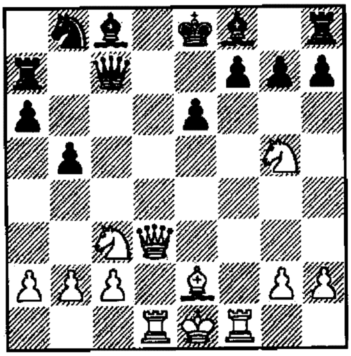
It remains for me to add that, after the game continuation **14...♗xg7 15 ♘e4 ♕e5 16 ♘bd6+ ♔e7 17 0-0 f5 18 ♖ad1 ♖d5 19 ♕c4**, a very sharp position was reached, with a slight advantage to White. True, in subsequent analysis it has not been demonstrated that he could at any point have increased his advantage...

But The Variation had to undergo a decisive examination later in our match, where one of the main lines was tested:

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7 10 exf6 ♕e5+ 11 ♗e2 ♕xg5 12 ♕d3 ♕xf6 13 ♖f1 ♕e5 14 ♖d1 ♖a7 15 ♘f3 ♕c7.

Here I must make a confession. After my game with Ljubojevic back in 1973, I thought to myself: 'What if, instead of 16 ♘e5, White should choose **16 ♘g5** ?' (*see diagram next column*).

Now Black cannot continue 16...♗e7 (in analogy with the game against Ljubojevic), since there follows not 17 ♘xf7, but 17 ♖xf7!, and if 17...♕xh2 18 ♖xg7, winning quickly. That only leaves 16...f5, but after 17 ♕d4!, with the terrible threat of ♗h5+, Black's position appears indefensible.

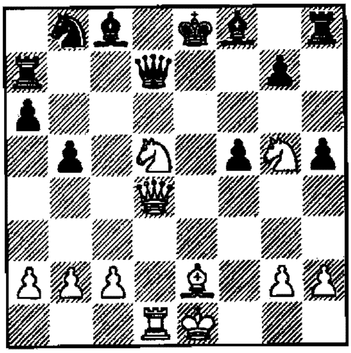


A year went by in searching, until I at last found an acceptable idea. What's more, my faith in the durability of Black's position was inspired by... the white rooks, which have 'locked' their king in the centre. It must be agreed that the king at e1 is no adornment to White's position...

This continuation received a practical testing six years later in the Tal-Polugyaevsky Match already referred to.

In the fourth game the former World Champion boldly went in for the diagram position, and after **16...f5** he continued, as I had once feared, **17 ♕d4**.

On this there followed **17...h5**, radically cutting short the threat of the bishop check at h5. And when White continued his attack with **18 ♖xf5 exf5 19 ♘d5**, Black replied **19...♕d7!**



It turns out that on 20 ♕e5+ ♗e7 21 ♕xb8 Black is perfectly happy to play 21...0-0, and after 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 he has more than adequate compensation for the queen. Black also has a defence in the variation 20 ♘f6+ gxf6 21 ♕xf6.

After spending considerable time in thought, Tal played **20 ♕h4**, after which probably the best that White can hope for is perpetual check. Black chose the safest move **20...♗e7** (20...♕c6 also deserved consideration, including the rook at a7 in the defence) **21 ♔f1!** (the plausible 21 ♗xh5+ ♔f8 22 ♘f4 leads to a win for Black after 22...♕e8!!) **21...♗xg5 22 ♗xh5+ ♔f8 23 ♕xg5 ♖xh5 24 ♕xh5 ♕f7 25 ♕h8+ ♕g8 26 ♕h4 ♔f7 27 ♕h5+ g6 28 ♕h4 ♕g7 29 ♕d8 ♗e6 30 ♕xb8 ♖d7**, and a subsequent inaccuracy allowed White to save the half point. Meanwhile, Black had the interesting possibility of 26...♘c6!, which after 27 ♘b4 (it was this that 'frightened' me during the game) 27...♗d7! 28 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 29 ♖d8+ ♗e8 30 ♕b4+ ♖e7 leads to a position where Black is tied up, but he has an extra piece, and White has no way of increasing the pressure.

Although satisfied with the result of this game, I nevertheless felt anxious. During the game itself, and then that evening in the hotel, I constantly felt uneasy. Was Black not being too optimistic? Had he taken everything into account?

In analysis I again tried to delve into what had happened. And although I did not immediately succeed in determining the cause of my anxiety, just in case I decided that in the match I would not 'play with fire' any more.

My forebodings proved to be fully justified. While still in Alma-Ata I hit on the 'trail': 20 ♖d3!!, with the murderous threat of 21 ♖e3+. The first estimates were depressing: 20...♖h6 21 ♗xh5+ ♖xh5 22 ♖e3+ ♔d8 23 ♕b6+ ♖c7 24 ♘xc7, or 20...♗d6 21 ♖e3+ ♔f8 22 ♘f6! I tried to find a defence with 20...♗e7, but all in vain: after 21 ♖e3 0-0 (21...♘c6 22 ♕xg7 ♕xd5 23 ♕xh8+ ♔d7 24 ♖d3) 22 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 23 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 the black rooks are unable to combat the white queen.

Thus my anxiety had not been unfounded. And after the conclusion of our match, from the expression of Tal and his trainer Kapengut I realised that they too had found the murderous 20 ♖d3!

It is probably that for a certain time only our small group knew this secret... But not for long. The inquisitive van der Vliet soon published the winning manoeuvre.

The d3 square has indeed been tragically unfortunate for The Variation! The reader will recall how much suffering was caused in the search for a defence against Bronstein's 12 ♕d3, and now on this same square the white rook had the final say.

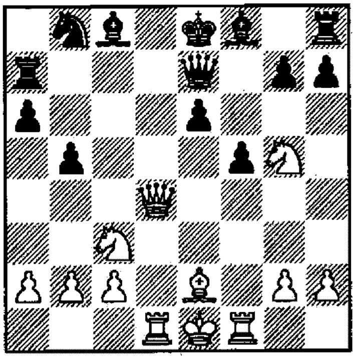
A very serious question posed itself: 'What to do?'

For a long time the situation with The Variation seemed absolutely hopeless. Understandably, of my confidence there remained not a trace. And yet inwardly there was still a glimmer of hope that, as with 10 ♕e2, a miracle would be found!

I make no secret of the fact that I appreciated fully the dangers of Black's actions, but at the same time a single thought constantly nagged away at me, one which I have already mentioned earlier: but have White's actions also been irreproachable? His king has not castled and is stuck in the centre, his dark-square bishop, very necessary in this type of position, has gone, and basically there is a lack of complete coordination. White's play is essentially based on the forcible rook sacrifice on f5, after which his second knight comes decisively into play. Can Black forestall his opponent's plan? A reply had to be found in concrete moves, with general evaluations pushed into the background.

A miraculous salvation occurred in an unexpected way.

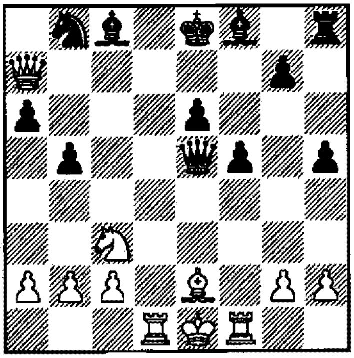
At the tournament in Ostende, 1983, in the game van der Wiel-Hodgson, instead of 17...h5 Black employed the original and outwardly very 'ugly' move 17...♕e7!?



The continuation was 18 ♘ge4 h5 19 ♘d6+ ♕xd6 20 ♕xa7 ♕xh2 21 ♖d3! ♗d7 22 ♖h3 ♕e5 23 ♖e3, and White won quickly. And therefore, at the time, few could have paid any serious attention to Black's apparently highly dubious experiment. But it was here that my character went into operation: in the Polugayevsky Variation to cast doubts on everything for both sides.

Delving into the position, I was fortunately able to discover the true cause of Black's defeat, which lay in the poor formulation of an excellent and most unusual idea. Had Hodgson, following the principle of centralisation, played 20...♕e5! instead of the reckless 20...♕xh2?, the picture would have changed radically.

This important improvement was revealed in the game **Am.Rodriguez-Polugayevsky**, Biel 1985. The two players quickly made the opening moves, leading to the familiar position: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7 10 exf6 ♕e5+ 11 ♗e2 ♕xg5 12 ♕d3 ♕xf6 13 ♖f1 ♕e5 14 ♖d1 ♖a7 15 ♘f3 ♕c7 16 ♘g5 f5 17 ♕d4 ♕e7 18 ♘ge4 h5 19 ♘d6+ ♕xd6 20 ♕xa7, and here I put into operation my secret weapon: **20...♕e5!**



The innovation had a depressing effect on my temperamental opponent: after all, White has to give up any dreams of an attack and exchange queens, otherwise his king in the centre faces great difficulties, since 21...♗c5 is threatened.

21 ♕d4 ♘d7! 22 ♕xe5 ♘xe5

The ending is clearly in favour of Black, who has two long-range bishops, a splendid knight and a powerful pawn phalanx in the centre. His subsequent actions are highly instructive.

23 ♔d2

White castles artificially, at the same time vacating e1 for his rook.

23...♗d6!

Black finds the best arrangement of his bishops. 23...♗c5 seems more aggressive, but after 24 h3 and then ♖fe1 he could have had problems on account of his knight being undefended.

24 ♔c1 ♔e7 25 ♖fe1

With the cunning trap of 26 ♗xb5!? axb5 27 ♖xd6 ♔xd6 28 ♘xb5+ ♔d5 29 ♘c3+ ♔d4 30 ♘b5+.

25...♗d7 26 ♗f1

Waiting tactics are pointless here, since Black can increase his positional advantage without difficulty, by advancing his pawns. White should have tried a2-a4, so as somehow to disturb Black's composure on the queenside.

26...♖c8 27 ♔g1 g5 28 h3 h4

Blocking the flank and fixing the weakness at g2.

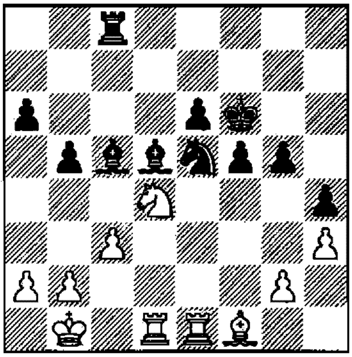
29 ♘e2 ♗c6 30 ♘d4 ♗b7 31 ♗d3 ♔f6!

Black has accurately worked out the consequences of the piece sacrifice: 32 ♘xe6 ♔xe6 33 ♗xf5+ ♔xf5 34 ♖xd6 ♗xg2 and White stands badly, or 32 ♗xf5 exf5 33 ♘xb5 ♗b4+ 34 ♘d6 ♗xe1 35 ♘xc8 ♗b4, winning easily.

32 ♗f1 ♗c5 33 c3

33 ♘b3 was slightly better, although it is unlikely that this would have substantially changed the course of the game.

33...♗d5



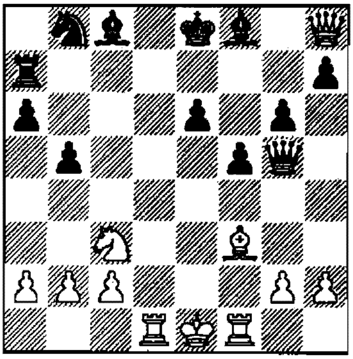
The triumph of the two bishops. For complete happiness it only remains for Black to await a favourable moment to advance ...g5-g4.

34 a3 ♘g6! 35 ♖d2 ♘f4 36 ♔a1 ♖g8! 37 ♘c2 g4

White is helpless: his rooks make a poor showing in the struggle against the black bishops.

38 b4 ♗a7 39 ♘e3 ♗xe3 40 ♖xe3 gxh3 41 gxh3 ♖g3! White resigns

Naturally, the analysis of 17...♕e7 was not limited to the continuation examined. The main emphasis was laid on **18 ♗h5+ g6 19 ♕xh8** (on 19 ♘ge4 there follows 19...♗g7 20 ♘d6+ ♔f8, and it is not apparent how White can breach Black's defences) **19...♕xg5 20 ♗f3**.



In this 'mysterious' position I think that I succeeded in finding the key to the solution: **20...♘d7!**

Having already sacrificed the exchange, Black also parts with a pawn. Continuing the variation 21 ♕xh7 ♕e3+ 22 ♘e2 ♘e5, we come to a curious conclusion: despite his material losses, Black's position looks very attractive. Now it is no longer the black king, but White's, that feels uncomfortable, the weakness of the dark squares in his position tells, and the mobility and coordination of his rooks are essentially reduced to nought by Black's splendidly placed knight. An instructive situation is reached, where White is painfully reminded of the defects in his set-up.

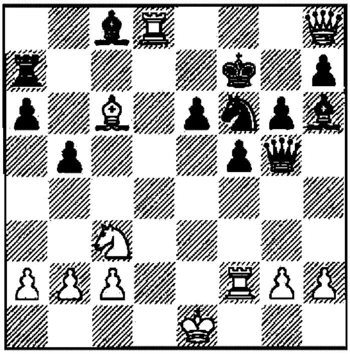
Apart from 21 ♕xh7 White also has 21 ♖f2, intending to bring the rook into play, and also preparing the evacuation of the king into a sheltered spot via f1. I have to admit that, when working on the position at home, I did not pay serious attention to this dangerous rook manoeuvre, and was made to pay dearly for this.

The game **Hellers-Polugayevsky**, Haninge 1989, went **21 ♖f2 ♕h6?**, and after the brilliant reply 22 ♖d6!! it transpired that 22...♔f7 is met by the spectacular 23 ♖xe6! ♔xe6 24 ♖e2+ ♔f7 25 ♗d5 mate. I was obliged to play 22... ♘b6, but after 23 ♖e2 ♘c4 24 ♕f6! ♗e7 (24...♗xd6 25 ♗c6+ ♗d7 26 ♖xe6+) 25 ♗c6+ ♗d7 26 ♖dxe6 Black resigned.

In a review of this event, grandmaster Ftacnik pointed out the only correct continuation for Black: 21...♘f6! 22 ♗c6+ ♔f7 23 ♖d8 ♕e3+ 24 ♔d1 (if 24 ♔f1 ♗g7 25 ♗e8+ ♔e7 26 ♕xg7+ ♔xd8 27 ♕xf6+ ♔xe8) 24...♗g7 25 ♗e8+ ♔e7 26 ♕xg7+ ♔xd8 27 ♕xf6+ ♔xe8 28 ♕h8+ ♔d7 29 ♖d2+ ♔c7 30 ♕xh7+ ♔b8 31 ♕xg6 ♕g1+ 32 ♔e2 ♕xh2, and Black even stands slightly better.

But White can play much more strongly: 24 ♘e2!, with the sequel 24...♗g7 (24... ♗h6 25 ♖f3!) 25 ♗e8+ ♔e7 26 ♕xg7+ ♔xd8 27 ♕xf6+ ♔xe8 28 ♕h8+ ♔d7 29 ♖f3!, and it is unlikely that Black can parry the threats.

But as Ftacnik rightly points out, Black, in turn, can significantly improve with 23...♗h6!!

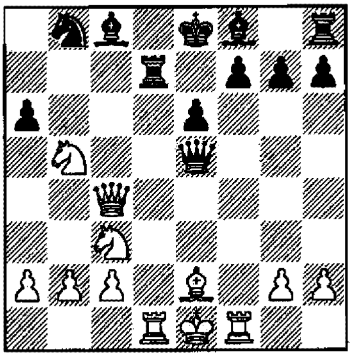


If 24 ♖e2 he has an adequate antidote: 24...♗b7! 25 ♗e8+ (25 ♗xb7 ♗g7) 25... ♔e7 26 ♖b8 ♕c1+ 27 ♘d1 ♗e4!, while after 24 ♖fd2 the simple 24...♖c7! neutralises all White's attempts. And in the event of 24 ♖xc8 there follows 24...♕e3+ 25 ♔f1 ♕c1+ with a draw, since 25 ♘e2 ♕d2+ is not possible for White.

Ftacnik's convincing analysis leaves few doubts and inspires Black with hopes of a successful outcome.

It seemed that, finally, all the problems had been overcome. But don't be in a hurry, dear reader! Anxiety in our Variation will, evidently, always be with us.

Late in 1993 in the game **Wolff-Polugayevsky** (Groningen) after the moves **8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7 10 exf6 ♕e5+ 11 ♗e2 ♕xg5 12 ♕d3 ♕xf6 13 ♖f1 ♕e5 14 ♖d1 ♖a7** my likeable opponent unexpectedly 'disconcerted' me with the sudden **15 ♘dxb5!!? ♖d7 16 ♕c4**.



Even so, it would be naïve to imagine that, when I was studying The Variation for months on end, I could have overlooked such a natural continuation. Several years ago, when sifting through all the possibilities, I hit on a crazy idea, and patiently awaited its hour... Nevertheless, I checked myself several times before replying:

16...♔d8?!!

From the reaction of my opponent, I immediately realised that I had hit the target! Black's move came as a complete surprise to Wolff, who later admitted that at home he had examined only 16...♕c5 and

16...♗c5, and that the 'mad' king manoeuvre had never occurred to him.

17 ♘d4 ♗d6 18 ♘f3!

At the board White finds a brilliant solution, and, more important, one that I had completely overlooked! Now it was my turn to face reality. Truly, an eye for an eye!

18...♕a5

During the game 18...♕e3 did not appeal to me on account of 19 ♖d3.

19 a3?

White fails to find the strongest continuation. After the game grandmaster Anand suggested a brilliant alternative: 19 ♕g4! f5 20 ♕g5+ ♔c7 21 ♖xd6! ♔xd6 22 ♕g3+ with a very dangerous attack, e.g. 22...e5 23 b4 f4 24 ♕g5 ♕xb4 25 ♕xe5+ ♔c6 26 ♘d2. But now Black is given an essential breathing space, and he consolidates his position.

19...f6

In this way Black takes control of some important squares, since 20 ♕xe6? fails to 20...♗g3+!

20 ♘d4 ♖e8 21 g3 ♕e5

21...♕c5! was better; after the exchange of queens, Black's two bishops give him a slight advantage in the endgame.

22 ♖f3 ♗b7 23 ♖fd3 ♔e7 24 ♘f3 ♗xf3 25 ♖xf3 ♖ed8 26 ♖fd3

The next phase of the game took place under conditions of approaching time trouble, in which both players made several mistakes.

26...f5 27 ♕h4+ ♔f7 28 ♕xh7 ♗xa3 28 ♕h5+ ♔f8?

28...♔f6 was correct.

30 ♕h8+ ♔f7 31 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 32 ♖xd7+ ♘xd7 33 ♕c8 ♘c5 34 ♘d1 ♗b4+ 35 c3 ♗a5 36 b4 ♘d3+ 37 ♔f1 ♘c1 38 ♕xa6 ♗c7 39 ♕c4 ♗b6 40 ♗f3 g5 41 ♕c6 ♗d8 42 ♕d7+ ♗e7 43 ♕d2?

43 ♗h5+ ♔f6 44 ♕e8 would have been immediately decisive.

43...♘b3 44 ♕c2 ♕b5+ 45 ♔g2 ♕a4 46 g4 ♘c5 47 ♕b1 ♕b5 48 gxf5 ♘d3 49 fxe6+ ♔xe6 50 ♘e3 ♘f4+ 51 ♔f2 ♘d3+ 52 ♔g1 ♘f4 53 ♕e4+ ♔d7 54 ♘c4 ♗f6 55 ♕h7+ ♔d8 56 ♕f7 ♗xc3 57 ♕f8+ ♕e8 58 ♕d6+ ♕d7 59 ♕f8+ ♕e8 60 ♕d6+ ♕d7 61 ♕b6+ ♕c7 62 a5 ♕xa5 63 bxa5 ♔c7 64 ♔f2 ♘d3+ 65 ♔g3 ♘e5, and this long-suffering game ended in a **draw**.

Understandably, this game caused a great stir and set both sides a mass of questions.

Can an improvement be found for Black between moves 17-19, or is he obliged to play differently and give up the idea of 16...♔d8? Should he try 16...♗c5, with the follow-up 17 ♘e4 0-0 18 ♕xc5 ♕xe4 19 ♘d6 ♕h4+? Or should he go in for the dangerous continuation 16...♗b7 17 ♖xd7?

To these and many other questions, only future experience can give an answer. And how long this new discussion will last, as yet it is difficult to guess.

It is time to draw the line. At the cost of enormous efforts, White's numerous attacks on The Variation have been repulsed and its honour has been upheld. Its second re-birth has occurred! For long? Will The Variation have sufficient 'health' to endure further in this difficult battle, will its devotees have sufficient optimism and courage? Already for more than 35 years The Variation has been striding along the chess road with 'its head held high'. Its adventurous life is set to continue!

3. In the Interval

IN THE WORK of the chess player outside the tournament hall, the analysis of adjourned games is the other, and of course essential, side of the coin. The banal assertion that it is carried out 'in the quiet of one's study' is hardly appropriate. The time allotted for analysis is, as a rule, less than one would like, and sometimes it is reduced to the minimum – in recent years international tournaments have been run more and more frequently on a tight schedule, whereby between the main session and the adjournment session one and a half to two hours are allowed 'for everything': eating, relaxation and analysis.

The time devoted to the analysis of unfinished games is crammed with mental activity. There is no time for distraction or relaxation, and so the hours spent on adjourned positions are, by their very nature, highly intensive and productive.

Analysis, in contrast to research work on opening problems, is always specific, in the sense that the opponent is already known. And although in an adjourned position one always tries to discover the absolute truth, knowledge of the opponent's strong and weak points can sometimes enable one to make the play as unpleasant as possible for him, to lower his vigilance by apparent inactivity, or to set problems that will be especially difficult for him in particular.

But in principle, I repeat, analysis, and the study of openings, are two aspects of a common form of creativity. In each case a part is played by intuition, general positional understanding, and experience. In each case, in contrast to a tournament game, a move can be taken back, and one does not have to keep spasmodically looking at the rising flag on the chess clock. But on the other hand, it is shameful to permit oneself a mistake, which is so common during play, it is shameful not to find the strongest continuation, and it is shameful to overlook a study-like win if there should be one, or the sole possibility of saving an apparently hopeless game.

I know that this is what a number of leading grandmasters think. And I also know that if, as a rule, a strong player analyses an adjourned position more deeply and more accurately than a player of lower standard, then if the analysis is indeed carried out with maximum intensity, this contributes to the development and improvement of the player.

After all, the positions analysed are normally rich in possibilities, since games where the outcome is clear are not normally played on. There is no better way of replenishing your supply of ideas and of teaching yourself to pay attention to nuances, than by searching for the strongest continuations both for yourself and your opponent. But if a player becomes carried away by his analysis 'in one direction' only, and if he does not so much study the various positions as 'revel' in them, and in his positional or material advantage, how many times do we witness surprises on the resumption! How many stalemating combinations does the defender find, and how many amazing transpositions into theoretically drawn endings! In short, the axiom that chess does not tolerate frivolity is especially clearly apparent in the analysis of unfinished games.

I should like to touch on another, in my opinion, very topical theme. In recent years players have been encountering increasingly rarely the problem of adjourned games. The introduction into our life of the six-hour control, and sometimes even eight hours of play to a finish, as well as various forms of events, including 'active' chess, may essentially reduce to nought the very process of analysing adjourned positions. We are witnessing how they are gradually ending up in the book of 'endangered species'.

I least of all consider myself an 'orthodox' person and an opponent of what is new. Therefore I can easily understand those who enthusiastically speak out against adjourned games, demonstrating that there is more of a spectacle if they are played to a finish, often in a time scramble.

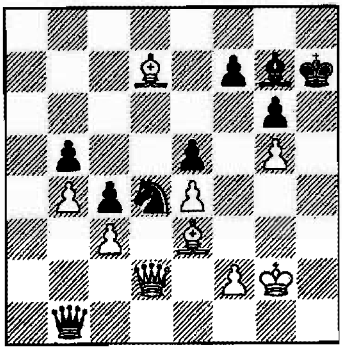
However, I should straight away like to warn the supporters of extreme measures, who are ready to break completely with the past and play only in 'rapid' tournaments: while winning in one way, we are losing in another, possibly more significant. We are depriving ourselves of a very important aspect of chess, where best of all are refined such qualities as degree of penetration into a position, self-criticism, and tenacity in achieving a goal. In my opinion, it would be very sad to deprive ourselves of those amazing, at times 'adventure' stories, which are the topic of this chapter. So why not listen to the voice of ancient times: 'moderation in everything!', and try to find a rational concensus, by a sensible coordination of all aspects of our everyday occupation.

BY THE METHOD OF TRIAL AND ERROR

There are many masters of analysis. On numerous occasions the possibilities in an adjourned position have been brilliantly demonstrated by Yefim Geller, Paul Keres and Vasily Smyslov. What wonderful examples of analysis we see in the games of Mikhail Botvinnik! And what's more, with the years, with the gaining of experience, the quality of analysis does not deteriorate, but improves. I know this from my own experience: work on adjourned positions becomes more sensible and more rational, fewer inaccuracies are committed, and even fewer superficial, premature judgements of the type 'the rest is obvious'. But, of course, it is life that has taught me this.

Here are a few examples.

Polugayevsky-Averbakh
28th USSR Championship, Moscow 1961



White has an undisputed positional advantage, in view of the chronic weakness of Black's queenside pawns, and also the difference in activity of the minor pieces. But the black queen is lurking in the enemy rear, and to gain the win considerable effort is still required.

During our adjournment analysis, Lyev Aronin, who was then my trainer, and I studied most carefully the position that arose after White's sealed move.

41 f3

We first considered 41...♘b3, to which we planned not, of course, the pseudo-aggressive 42 ♕d5? ♕c2+ 43 ♔g3 ♕xc3 44 ♗f2 ♘d2, when it is Black who has the attack, but the quiet 42 ♕e2, and if again 42...♘d4, then either the simple 43 ♕f2, or the sharper 43 cxd4. By moving to e2, the queen stops the black c-pawn from advancing with gain of tempo.

The move we settled on as the strongest was the one in fact made by Yuri Averbakh, that brilliant master of the endgame.

41 ... ♕a1
42 ♗e8!

A move, at first sight hard to understand, but in fact very strong. The idea of it is to lure the black king to g8, where it will be in danger should the white queen succeed in crossing the demarcation line and participating in the attack on f7: 42...♔g8 43 cxd4 exd4 44 ♗f2 c3 45 ♕f4! Now the defence 45...♕a7 allows the blockade of the black pawns with 46 ♗xb5 followed by ♗d3, while on 45...♕a2 White has the very strong reply 46 ♗c6 c2 47 ♗d5 ♕a7 48 ♗b3.

On finding this, we took into account various other possibilities for Black, whereby he advances his pawns rather more accurately, succeeded in neutralising them, and relaxed.

42 ... ♔g8
43 cxd4 c3!?

This move we had not taken seriously, and we were thereby made to pay for breaking Botvinnik's recommendation: take account of all the possible continuations in the position!

In our analysis we had noted in passing that after this Black's pawn chain is broken up, and that it is easier to blockade the c- and d-pawns, but we did not think to analyse the move for some 10-15 minutes. And although, as it later turned out, White's position was still won, in an unfamiliar situation, rapidly becoming sharper, I made a mistake, ran short of time, and in the end almost lost.

44 ♕d3!

I spent a considerable amount of time calculating variations involving that same idea of an attack on f7: 44 ♕f2 exd4 (Black does not have time for 44...♕b2 – 45 dxe5 c2 46 e6, and White returns the piece, contenting himself with a couple of extra pawns and an attack, with opposite-colour bishops) 45 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 46 ♕xd4 ♕a2+ 47 ♔g3 c2 48 ♕c5, and after 48...♕b2 White wins by 49 ♕e7, but what can he do after 48...♕c4? Only resign!

I therefore outlined a plan to blockade the black pawns, deferring for the moment any ideas of attack.

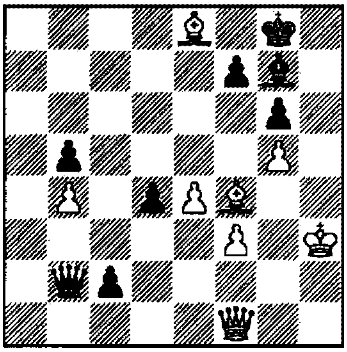
44 ... ♕b2+
45 ♔h3!

More accurate than 45 ♔g3, which after 45...exd4 46 ♗f4 could have given Black additional chances based on ...♗e5, diverting the white bishop from the black c-pawn's queening square.

45 ... exd4
46 ♗f4

After 46 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 47 ♕xd4 ♕c1 White cannot avoid perpetual check.

46 ... c2
47 ♕f1

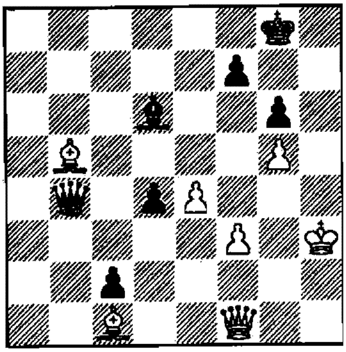


At the cost of approaching time trouble and great effort, White has found a series of best moves, and has set up the desired blockade. The advance 47...d3 leads merely to the loss of the black pawns – 48 ♗xb5 and 49 ♗xd3, so Black attempts to switch his bishop to the a3-c1 diagonal, so as to nevertheless enable his c-pawn to make the last step forward.

47 ... ♗f8!
48 ♗xb5 ♗d6

Or 48...♗xb4 immediately, which would not have changed anything: White would all the same have retreated his bishop to c1.

49 ♗c1 ♕xb4



50 e5??

If White had known this resulting position from his analysis, he would without much thought have converted it into a win, which was not now far off: 50 ♗d3 ♕b1 51 f4, when the direct attack on the king by e4-e5 and f4-f5 is decisive.

On 51...♕a1 he can play the accurate 52 ♔g4, so as to avoid the pin on the third rank after 52...♗a3 53 ♗xa3, while the manoeuvre 51...♗b4 52 e5 ♗c3, with the idea of 53...♗b2, is too late, on account of 54 f5 gxf5 (54...♗b2 55 fxg6, and mates) 54 ♗xf5 ♗d2(b2) 55 ♗h7+! ♔f8 (or 55...♔xh7 56 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 57 g6) 56 e6, and wins.

But I was tempted by the absurd idea of luring the black bishop to e5 and then, by attacking it with my queen, of transferring the queen either to d2, so as to win the c-pawn, or to e8, so as to attack f7. And here is what happened.

50 ... ♗xe5
51 ♗d3 ♕b1
52 ♕e1 ♗f4
53 ♗c4

It would appear that the second goal has been achieved, and that there is no defence against mate in three moves or the loss of the bishop (after 53...♕b7), but...

53 ... ♗e3

This was the move that White had overlooked. He immediately finds himself on the verge of defeat.

With my flag poised to fall, I leapt out of the trap with my queen (after 54 ♗d3 ♕xc1 55 ♕xc1 ♗xc1 56 ♗xc2 ♗xg5 the ending, despite the opposite-colour bishops, may be beyond saving).

54 ♕a5

And it is quite possible that Averbakh was wrong to capture my bishop immediately, allowing me to gain perpetual check.

54 ... ♕xc1
55 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7

Or 55...♔g7 56 ♕e5+, with the same result.

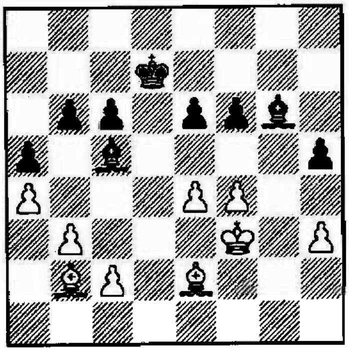
56 ♕d5+ ♔e7
57 ♕e5+

Drawn

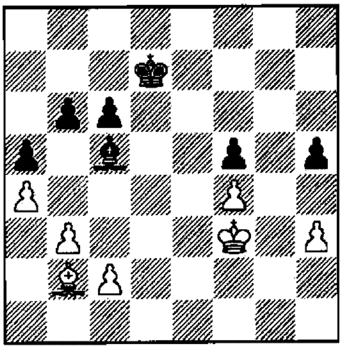
Even later in my career, when I already had experience both of competing in strong events, and also of analysing the most complex adjourned games, I would sometimes 'permit myself' costly, but at the same time instructive, mistakes. Here is one such example:

Larsen-Polugayevsky

Le Havre 1966



42 ... f5
43 ♗d3 fxe4+
44 ♗xe4 ♗f5
45 ♗xf5 exf5



In making my 42nd move, I had in fact aimed for this position, in which the game was adjourned.

It is difficult to imagine that Black can lose this ending. His slightly inferior queenside pawn structure is compensated by White's weakness at f4. But, it turns out, bishop endings still contain a number of secrets. During my adjournment analysis I realised that the task facing me was not easy. Over a period of several hours during the night which preceded the morning resumption, I worked through the two basic possibilities of attacking the pawn at h5:

A. 46 ♗f6 ♔e6 47 ♗g5, intending ♔g3-g4. If now 47...♗b4, then 48 ♗d8 b5 (48...♗c5 49 ♔b3) 49 ♔e3 and 50 ♔d3, followed by c2-c3, winning the pawn at a5.

If on 46 ♗f6 ♔e6 47 ♗g5 Black plays 47...♔d5, then after 48 ♗d8 ♔d4 49 ♗f6+ ♔d5 White gains a tempo, and Black again has serious difficulties.

But in the end I found that after 46 ♗f6 Black can draw by 46...♗e7! 47 ♗g5 (the pawn ending is also drawn) 47...♗b4! etc.

B. 46 ♔g3 ♗e7 47 ♗g7 ♔e6 48 ♗h6 ♔d5 49 ♗g5 ♗d6 50 ♗d8 ♔e4 51 ♗xb6 ♗xf4+.

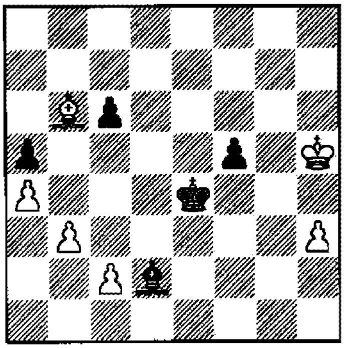
On reaching this position I cut short my analysis, since I assumed that the strong passed f-pawn should give Black at least equal chances. That was my general assessment, and I preferred sleep to any further analysis. But it was here that my main mistake lay: on resumption this was the path chosen by Larsen, although it involved a serious risk for him.

The game continued:

46 ♔g3 ♗e7
47 ♗g7 ♔e6
48 ♗h6 ♔d5
49 ♗g5 ♗d6

In his analysis, Larsen thought that the strongest continuation for Black was 49... ♗c5 50 ♔h4 ♔d4 51 ♔xh5 ♔c3, with equal chances. But here it was Larsen who was wrong: the h-pawn is considerably more important than all the queenside pawns.

50 ♗d8 ♔e4
51 ♗xb6 ♗xf4+
52 ♔h4 ♗d2
53 ♔xh5



This paradoxical decision, taken by Larsen on the resumption of the game, affected me psychologically. I simply could not believe that the resulting position was favourable for White; but on the other hand I had not carried through my adjournment analysis to the end. And I was further influenced by the feeling that Larsen was confidently following an already familiar path, along which he had accurately noted all the pitfalls, whereas I was having to act 'spontaneously'.

53 ... f4?

Here it is, the decisive mistake!

Meanwhile, Black had at his disposal a very strong move, which could, and should, have been worked out during the adjournment analysis: 53...♔f3! (not allowing the white king to come back). E.g. 54 h4 f4 55 ♔g6 ♗e3 56 ♗xa5 ♔e2 57 ♗c7 f3 58 ♗g3 ♗f4, and Black wins!

It is curious that the move 53...♔f3 also escaped Larsen's attention, even though he had reached this position on his board during the night.

54 ♔g4 ♗e1
55 h4!! f3
56 ♔h3!

White's aim is to control g2 with his king, and then divert Black's forces by the advance of the h-pawn. The black bishop turns out to have more difficulties than it can cope with.

56 ... ♔f4
57 ♗c5 ♔f5
58 ♗e7

In this way White prepares the advance of his h-pawn.

58 ... ♔e4

The best chance. If now 59 ♗g5, then 59...♔d4, breaking through to the queenside pawns.

59 h5!

Larsen accurately and consistently carries out his plan. Now on 59...♔e3 there follows 60 ♗c5+ ♔e2 (60...♔d2 61 h6 ♔xc2 62 ♗d4) 61 h6 f2 62 ♗xf2 ♗xf2 63 h7 ♗d4 64 b4! axb4 65 a5 ♔d2 66 a6 ♔xc2 67 a7, and White wins.

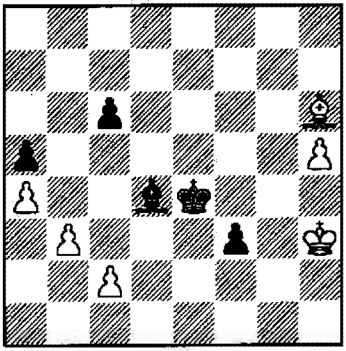
59 ... ♗d2
60 ♗c5!

Once again keeping the black king out of e3.

60 ... ♗e3
61 ♗f8!

The bishop is ready to support the advance of the h-pawn at that moment when its black opposite number is depriving its own king of the e3 square.

61 ... ♗d4
62 ♗h6!!



White fails to achieve his goal after 62 h6 ♔e3 63 ♗g7 ♗xg7 64 hxg7 f2, with a draw.

But now he threatens by ♔g3 to finally neutralise the f-pawn, which Black can on no account allow.

62 ... ♗e5

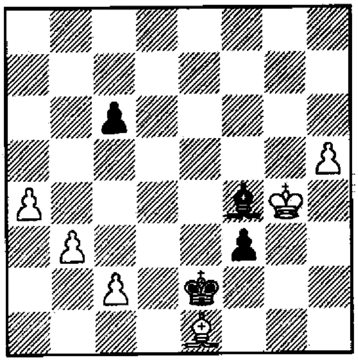
Bad is 62...♗e3 63 ♗g7, when the e3 square is again inaccessible to the black king, while the white h-pawn cannot be stopped.

63 ♗d2!

Four brilliant moves by the white bishop, and Black's position has become hopeless. The pawn at a5 is doomed.

63 ... ♗f4
64 ♗xa5 ♔e3
65 ♗e1 ♔e2
66 ♔g4!!

This shows the extent to which Larsen's analysis went further than my own careless analysis. Despite all White's previous successes, it is only this move that leads to a win. Incidentally, it was made instantly...



66	...	♗h6
67	♗h4	♗d2
68	♗g3	c5

Black no longer has any useful moves.

69	c4	f2
70	♗xf2	♔xf2
71	h6!	♔e3
72	h7	♗c3
73	a5	**Black resigns**

Of course, in subsequent years I encountered other surprises during the resumption of games; no one is guaranteed against them. But from the example of my adjourned game with Rafael Vaganian, which is given a little further on, it will be seen that a rationally constructed analysis, even with some omissions, will allow one to find a way out at the board.

What is meant by a rational analysis? There is no single answer to this – too much depends on the individuality of the chess player. Some outline only general plans and the piece set-up for which they are aiming. This, for example, is how ex-World Champion Smyslov analyses, and in this he is helped by his brilliant intuition. Grandmaster Geller's method is rather different. Apart from the plan itself, he also works out in great detail the most specific ways imaginable of carrying it out. That is also how I try to operate, and with experience I have begun more and more often – and nowadays almost always – to resort to Botvinnik's principle, which has already been mentioned: not to disregard any moves in the position which are at all possible, even the most 'stupid' and apparently absurd. For it is these that can contain a good deal of venom, and several examples, that we have yet to come to, will confirm this.

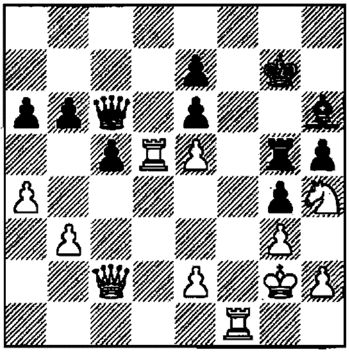
All this refers to the strategy, as it were, of analysis. When it comes to tactics, this depends on many factors, in particular on the player's tournament position, on his state of health, on the number of unfinished games he has accumulated, and on the schedule of the event. Sometimes it makes sense not to use up all your strength on the thorough study of an adjourned position, in order to avoid losing a mass of points in other unfinished or subsequent games. Sometimes, when you know your opponent well, you can take a risk by assuming that he won't go in for a particular variation, and thus economise on effort by reducing the extent of your analysis. All this depends very specifically on the circumstances. I can state only one thing with complete certainty: it is wrong to analyse right up to the last minute before the resumption of the game. One should, on sitting down at the board, be able for a moment to glance at the familiar position from the side, as it were. If something has been overlooked in analysis, or if it has not been carried through to the end, such a glance may help, and in the experience of each one of us there are certainly examples that will confirm this.

But in general, when there are no exceptional circumstances in the tournament, a player should, in my opinion, go fully into the analysis, devoting to it maximum effort and time. Suppose that even a part of this effort proves to be wasted – it will subsequently be rewarded. Analysis is an excellent form of training; it develops efficiency, perseverance and stamina, which chess players really need no less than marathon runners. And in sport, severe training methods have for a long time been practised.

But nevertheless, even after working move by move through the adjourned position 'à la Botvinnik', I have sometimes, at literally the last minute – it has happened on the way to the tournament hall, or even when sitting down at the board – noticed a 'hole' in my analysis. This happens to everyone I know, and in some cases is of no consequence, although it is annoying, especially if much time and effort have been spent on the analysis. It is important only that the number of such omissions should not show a tendency to increase.

Here is one memorable example.

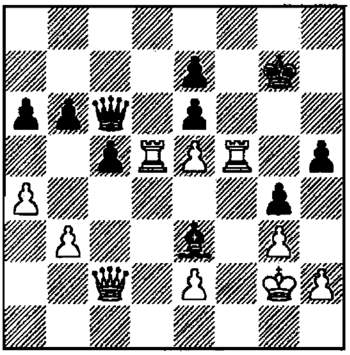
Vaganian-Polugayevsky
39th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971



The analysis of this adjourned position took me roughly ten hours of highly intensive work, while my opponent, as he himself said, spent less than half an hour on it. He considered the position to be clearly drawn, whereas I found a multitude of possibilities... for him, and, naturally, I looked for a defence against them for myself. The resumption of the game itself lasted approximately five minutes...

To go back to the first five hours of 'normal time', in this game there was everything: at first White had the advantage, then Black, and then all sorts of adventures began. When the game was finally adjourned, I couldn't decide who stood better. Psychologically, of course, it was unpleasant for me – I was a rook down. Then it appeared that there were various pins, the rook could be regained, and in addition Black had lots of pawns – in short, there was no cause for despair. But when I reached the hotel, I quickly saw that all these thoughts were the result of the five-hour battle, and that in fact it was not at all easy for Black to save the game. In addition, of course, I didn't know White's sealed move, which could be either 41 e4, or 41 ♘f5+.

At first I couldn't see what I was going to do after 41 ♘f5+. If 41...exf5, then 42 e4, and Black's position is unpleasant. And on 41...♜xf5 42 ♖xf5 exd5 (or 42...exf5, or 42...♛xd5) White replies 43 e4! But here came my first ray of hope: in this last variation I managed to find a move which I am sure you will not fail to like: 42...♝e3!!



A slight digression: later I met David Bronstein, and I couldn't deny myself the pleasure of showing him this position and this move – after all, it is not often that one finds continuations that can compare with the famous ...♜xa3 in the game between Bronstein and Mikenas from one of the USSR Championships! David Ionovich liked the move, but I have to confess that his rejoinder came as something of a surprise:

'Oh Lyev, if only it wasn't a bishop you had at e3, but a knight!'

But let us return to reality. After 42...♗e3 White has nothing better than perpetual check by 43 ♖f7+ ♔xf7 44 ♕h7+. Otherwise on, for instance, 43 ♕d3 exd5, Black himself gives mate.

Thus one move, 41 ♘f5+, had been dealt with. But the other caused Black much more trouble. It turned out that this was the move that had in fact been sealed.

41 e4 exd5

Black has to concede control of f5, since there is no other way out.

42 ♘f5+ ♖xf5

Otherwise White wins easily by capturing on e7 with his knight.

43 ♖xf5

The alternative capture, 43 exf5, is dangerous now for White, in view of 43...d4+. After the move played, in my analysis I had prepared an apparently unclear reply.

43 ... e6

After the game Vaganian asked me: 'Why did you play 43...e6? If you had captured on e4 – 43...dxe4, I would have offered you a draw immediately.'

I was quite put out, and I replied:

'What do you mean, draw?! After 44 ♕c4 Black is in a bad way.'

In short, 43...e6 was the only possibility of resistance. It was after this that the real analysis was required!

At first I examined 44 ♖f6 ♗g5 45 ♖f1 dxe4 46 h4 (so as to give the king a shelter at h2) 46...gxh3+ 47 ♔xh3, and White's heavy pieces must inevitably penetrate into the vicinity of the black king. 46...♗e7 is also inadequate, since the bishop retreats to a passive position, while after 46...e3+ 47 ♔h2 ♗h6 48 ♖f6 Black succumbs on g6, since 48...♕e8 is answered by 49 ♕e4, with the threat of 50 ♕b7+.

I also checked the tactical possibility 46...♗d2, but – and you will have to take my word for this, since there are too many variations in the analysis – after 47 ♕d1 Black nevertheless loses.

There remained only 46...♗h6. Now the natural 47 ♖f6 can be parried: 47...♕d5 48 ♕c4 ♕xe5 49 ♖xe6 ♕b2+, and White cannot avoid perpetual check.

But White appears to have a more effective course: 47 ♔h2 ♕d5 48 ♕f2 ♕xe5 49 ♕f7+. True, after 49...♔h8 50 ♕g6 ♗g7 51 ♖d1 ♗f6! White has nothing, in view of the threat of perpetual check should his rook leave the first two ranks.

I was therefore 'forced' to analyse for White the more prosaic exchange of queens – 50 ♕f6+ ♗g7 51 ♕xe5 ♗xe5. Black has three pawns for the exchange, and, of course, if White were to play here 52 ♖e1 ♗d4 53 ♖xe4 e5 followed by ...♔g7-f6, Black would stand no worse.

But White has a much stronger move in 52 ♖f7!, cutting off the black king, and if 52...e3 53 ♔g2 e2 54 ♔f2 ♗xg3+ 55 ♔xe2 ♗xh4, then the white rook has time to capture the a- and b-pawns, when the white a-pawn is clearly superior to the black h-pawn.

Salvation was found in a semi-study: 52 ♖f7 e3 53 ♔g2 b5! 54 ♖e7! c4! 55 bxc4 e2 56 ♔f2 (this is why 54 ♖e7 is given an exclamation mark, although 54 ♖a7 appears stronger; Black does not now have 56...♗d4+) 56...bxa4! 57 ♖xe6 e1=♕+ 58 ♔xe1 ♗xg3+, and it turns out that the c-pawn is not so terrible, since the black king just succeeds in stopping it, while the black pawns divert the rook.

The main continuation is 59 ♔e2 ♔g7 60 c5 ♔f7 61 ♖e3 (stronger than 61 ♖xa6) 61...♗xh4 62 c6 ♗d8 63 ♖d3 ♔e8, and tempo by tempo Black can defend.

One can imagine what a great deal of time this analysis took me. Then roughly an hour before I was due to set off for the resumption, I discovered that this was all romanticism. The simple fact is that after 43...e6 44 ♖f6 ♗g5 Black must resign, and what's more, immediately: 45 ♖g6+! ♔xg6 46 exd5+, and the queen is lost.

You can imagine my feelings! I was obliged to change to another course (apart from the line shown above, I had also analysed the following variation: 43...e6 44 ♖f6 d4 45 ♖f1 ♗e3, although I didn't like the fact that White could play h2-h3, then exchange on g4 and transfer his rook via h1 to h4), where in general some sort of salvation had also been found.

The resumption of the game, however, was brief and simple.

44 ♖xh5

At the time, the analysis of this continuation took me some ten minutes, not more...

44 ... dxe4
45 ♕d1 e3+
46 ♔g1 ♕f3
47 ♕d7+

White cannot exchange on f3, since the black pawns, with the support of their bishop, would quickly decide the game.

47 ... ♔g6
48 ♕e8+
Drawn

There is no escape from perpetual check.

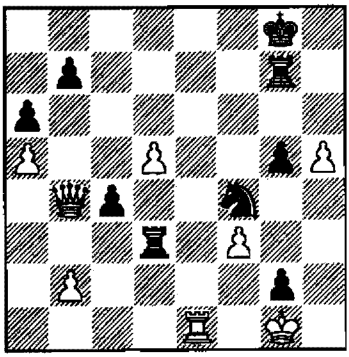
I consider that the resumption of this game is a good illustration on the theme of 'the torment of creativity'.

ON WHAT REMAINS UNSEEN

Polugayevsky-Hulak

Budapest 1975

Strictly speaking, White has a slight material advantage – queen against rook and knight – but God only knows how much the black pawn at g2 is worth!



To this day I recall how, on emerging from the time scramble and considering my sealed move, I was constantly distracted by thoughts such as: 'Good heavens, another brain-twister!' Indeed, as regards its abnormal set-up and mutual lack of safety of the kings, I can compare this position only with my adjourned game against Gheorghiu from the Petropolis Interzonal, 1973[†]. Although there, as can be seen, the variations were more colourful.

Here I should mention that play was daily, without any rest days, but that every five rounds a special day was set aside for adjournments. Since this was my only adjourned game, I had, fortunately, ample time for analysis. I spent a mass of time working through the variations, time which I in no way regretted, since I discovered the content of the position to be amazingly logical and elegant.

The first few hours of analysis led me to the conclusion that White has good winning chances. Then new ideas appeared, and I became convinced that the position was probably drawn. But my searching did not end there. I attempted to penetrate more deeply into the variations, and soon my persistence was rewarded: in practically all lines I succeeded in discovering improvements... The final painstaking 'polishing' showed me that only in one single place (which was not easily reached) could the opponent draw.

[†] Cf. the author's *Grandmaster Performance*, also published by Cadogan (translator's note).

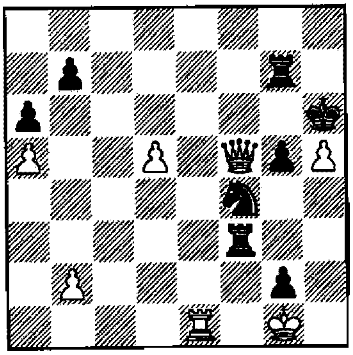
I sealed the strongest move:

42 ♕xc4

As I later learned, my opponent spent a considerable time searching for a defence against 42 d6, which in the end he succeeded in doing.

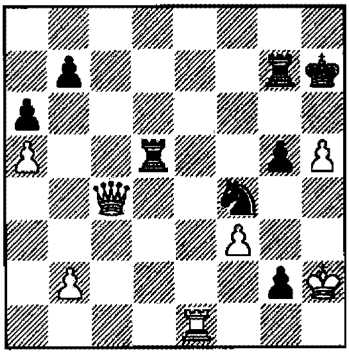
My analysis (after 42 ♕xc4) proceeded along the following lines: 42...♖d2 (42...♖xd5 loses to 43 ♖e5 ♖d7 44 ♖xg5+) 43 ♔h2! ♔h7 44 ♕c8 ♖xd5 45 ♖e8, and the game is quickly decided, since the black king cannot successfully escape from the danger zone.

Then after 42 ♕xc4 I began considering the immediate 42...♔h7. Now it will be seen that in the variation 43 ♔h2 ♖xd5 44 ♕c8 Black has saved an important tempo. Being unable to find a win for White, I decided to try a different way: 42...♔h7 43 ♕e4+ ♔h6 44 ♕f5. This continuation intrigued me – to save the game Black has to find the one possible defence! It appears that he can calmly play 44...♖xf3 (44...♖xd5? 45 ♖e6+), since on 45 ♖e6+ he has the reply 45...♔xh5, and if 45 ♕f6+ ♔h7. But it turns out that on 44...♖xf3 White has a subtle intermediate move.



45 ♕g4!, and now both 45...♖h3 46 ♖e6+!, and 45...♖d3 46 ♖e6+, end in catastrophe for Black. I realised that a crafty move such as 45 ♕g4 could easily be overlooked, but on the other hand after the correct 44...♔xh5! White has no chance of winning.

As a result, I had to return completely to the variation 42 ♕xc4 ♔h7! 43 ♔h2! ♖xd5.



Here, apart from the move already considered, 44 ♕c8, my attention was drawn to 44 ♖e8 and 44 ♕e4+.

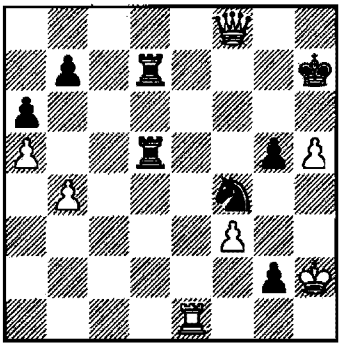
After 44 ♖e8 (with the threat of 45 ♕e4+) I could not discover any definite advantage for White after 44...♔h6 or 44...♖dd7.

I was therefore attracted by the check – 44 ♕e4+ ♔h6 45 ♕e8. It turns out that the threat of ♖e6+ is very strong. On 45...♖dd7 White now has the reply 46 ♕h8+ ♖h7 47 ♕f6+ ♔xh5 48 ♖e5. Although White has enticed the opposing king forward, it nevertheless appears that by 48...♖dg7 (48...♖hg7 49 ♕xf4) 49 ♕xf4?? ♔g6+ Black can defend successfully. But White, in turn, does not have to hurry, and on 48...♖dg7 he replies with the murderous 49 ♔g1!, when the threat of 50 ♕xf4 is now deadly. 49...♔h4 does not help – 50 ♕f5!

This put me back in a good frame of mind, and I decided that everything was now in order. Just in case, I decided also to examine the variation 44 ♕e4+ ♔h6 45 ♕e8 ♔h7, although here 46 ♕f8 looks very powerful, intending 47 ♖e8 (if now 46...♘xh5 47 ♔xg2, and White has a technically won ending).

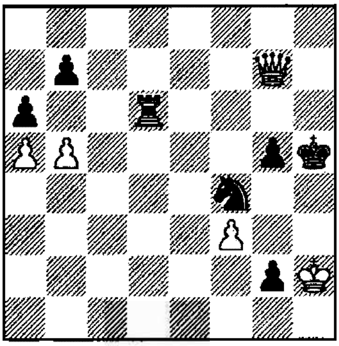
Suddenly, to my horror, I noticed that by answering 46 ♕f8 with 46...♖gd7 47 ♖e8 g1=♕+!, Black is the first to give mate. This showed how dangerous it was for me to cut off my heavy pieces so far from 'base'.

After a short break, I decided in this last variation to try the idea of *zugzwang*, answering 46...♖gd7 with 47 b4!



But Black has the reply 47...♖c7 – there is no *zugzwang* after all. But what about continuing this variation? 48 ♖e7+! ♖xe7 49 ♕xe7+ ♔h6 50 ♕f8+ ♔xh5 (50...♔h7 is bad in view of 51 h6 ♖d7 52 ♕f5+, winning the rook) 51 ♕g7! Now the attempt to defend against the mate by 51...♔h4 fails to 52 ♕h6+ ♘h5 53 ♕e6. However, Black has in reserve the simple 51...♖d6, and what is White to do?

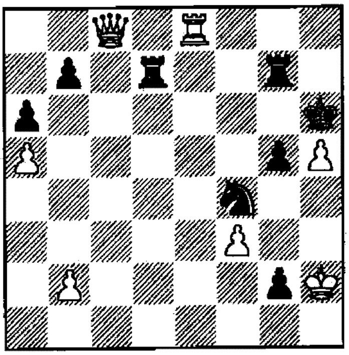
It was here that I was able to put into practice an idea that had never left me all through my work on the adjourned position: how to utilise the existence on the board of the queenside pawns?! And immediately the idea was found: 52 b5!! Here it is – the truth! The white pawns break through an apparently impenetrable barrier. Weaker is 52 ♕h7+ ♖h6 53 ♕f7+ ♖g6 54 ♕xb7 ♔h6!, and White does not have time to utilise his pawn majority, since the opponent has the strong threat of 55...♖e6. But by 55 b5!! White gains an important tempo for setting up a passed pawn.



E.g. 52...♖e6 53 ♕h7+ ♖h6 54 ♕f7+ ♖g6 55 ♕xb7 ♔h6 56 bxa6 ♖e6 57 ♕b6 ♔h5 58 a7 ♖e1 59 a8=♕ ♖h1+ 60 ♔g3, and White wins.

Or 52...axb5 53 ♕h7+ ♖h6 54 ♕f7+ ♔h4 (54...♖g6 55 ♕xb7 ♔h6 56 a6 ♖e6 57 a7 ♖e1 58 ♕b6+ ♔h5 59 ♕g1! ♖e8 60 ♕a1, and Black has no defence) 55 ♕xb7 g1=♕+ 56 ♔xg1 ♔g3 57 ♕xb5 ♖d6 58 ♕b1, and after overcoming certain technical difficulties, White is bound to win. Not being satisfied with such a general assessment, I even worked out how this might happen.

Now, just when it seemed that the goal was close in almost all variations, I at last realised that after 42 ♕xc4 ♔h7 43 ♔h2 Black should play 43...♔h6! immediately (this move is undoubtedly the strongest, since the white queen does not now reach e8, and all the beautiful variations found earlier turn out to be the dream of a romantic) 44 ♖e8 (on 44 ♕e4 the simple 44...♔xh5 is a good reply) 44...♖xd5, and Black sets up a fortress after 45 ♕c8 (not 45 ♖h8+ ♖h7 46 ♕c3?? g1=♕+!) 45...♖dd7!



46 ♖h8+ ♖h7 47 ♕xd7 ♖xh8 48 ♕f7 ♖h7! 49 ♕g8 ♖g7 (there is no way that White can separate the rook from the king) 50 ♕h8+ ♖h7.

White's last chance is to battle for the 6th rank: 46 ♖f8 (in order to answer 46...♔xh5 with 47 ♖f6, with the threat of ♕g4 mate). But Black replies 46...♖gf7! (not 46...♖df7 47 ♖d8, and the rook penetrates onto the 6th rank) 47 ♕e8 ♖xf8 48 ♕xf8+ ♖g7, and the coupling mechanism between king and rook again goes into operation.

And so, a draw, after all. But how difficult it is for Black to achieve! And I decided not to be in a hurry to conclude peace...

The game was resumed. After 42 ♕xc4 my opponent thought for a little, and then played

42 ... **♔h7!**

I quickly replied

43 ♔h2

and waited anxiously for what would come next. After a few minutes Hulak played

43 ... **♔h6!**

'Surely all my efforts haven't been in vain?!' But what's this? After

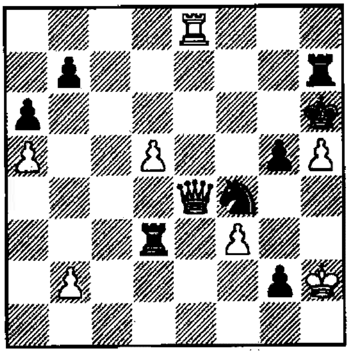
44 ♖e8

the Yugoslav master sank into thought for a long time. Now it was clear that he had not analysed in detail the resulting position, although he had 'guessed' correctly the first two moves with the king. If this were so, then at the board it would not be at all easy for him to work out all the subtleties. And that's how it was! Black promptly made a decisive mistake.

44 ... **♖h7?**

As was stated earlier, 44...♖xd5 is correct.

45 ♕e4!



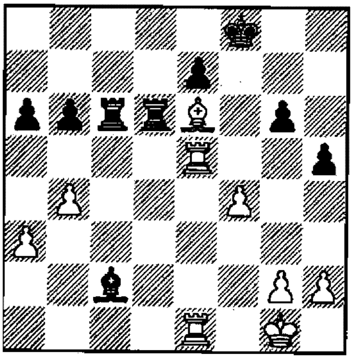
Black can resign, since on almost every move there follows 46 ♖e6+. E.g. 45...♖d1 46 ♖e6+ ♘xe6 47 ♕g6 mate. He therefore decided to transpose into a rook ending, but this proved to be an elementary win for White.

45	...	**g1=♕+**
46	**♔xg1**	**♖d1+**
47	**♔f2**	**♖d2+**
48	**♔e1**	**♖e2+**
49	**♕xe2**	**♘xe2**
50	**♔xe2**	**♖d7**
51	**♖e5**	**♔xh5**
52	**♔e3**	**Black resigns**

FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH

Polugayevsky-Suetin
Chigorin Memorial Tournament
Kislovodsk 1972

For a long time in this game Black successfully repulsed his opponent's threats, but by the time of the adjournment White nevertheless still had a positional advantage, in particular on account of Black's three pawn islands (as opposed to two for White) and, even more important, the fact that the pawns at a6 and e6 are on light squares.



After thinking for a comparatively short time, Suetin sealed

42 ... ♖d1

Black's desire to exchange rooks is understandable, since White's pressure down the e-file is unpleasant, but 42...♖c3 was better, pinning his hopes on counterplay.

43 ♖xd1 ♗xd1

I analysed this position a great deal. White has an undisputed advantage, but it is not easy to find the correct path. One plausible line is 44 f5 gxf5 (weaker is 44...g5 45 ♖d5) 45 ♖xf5+ ♔g7 46 ♖f7+ ♔g6, and now White can capture on e7, since if 47 ♖xe7 ♔f6 he has 48 ♗d5 ♖d6 49 ♖f7+ ♔g6 50 ♗a2 ♖d2 51 ♖f2, when he keeps his extra pawn, while in the event of 47... ♖c1 48 ♔f2 ♔f6 49 ♖e8 ♗a4 he saves his piece by 50 ♖c8.

However, in these variations White's extra pawn is probably insufficient to win. 44 ♔f2 looks very strong, in order to attempt to penetrate with the king into Black's kingside. E.g. 44...♖c2+ 45 ♔g3 ♖c3+ 46 ♔h4 ♖xa3 47 f5 (not 47 ♔g5 ♗c2) 47... gxf5 48 ♖xf5+ ♔g7 (48...♔e8? 49 ♗f7+ ♔d7 50 ♖d5+) 49 ♔g5, and White should win. But against 44 ♔f2 Black has a good defence in 44...h4, preventing the approach of the white king. In the end I settled on 44 ♗d5 as being the strongest move.

44 ♗d5 ♖f6

The only move, since 44...♖c3 45 ♖e6 ♗c2 46 a4 is clearly advantageous for White.

45 ♗e4

The idea of this move is to prevent Black's ...a6-a5, and in addition the g6 pawn is attacked.

45 ... ♗g4
46 ♗d3 ♗c8

Not the best. Black still had drawing chances after 46...♖xf4 47 ♗xg6 ♔g7.

47 ♖d5 ♔e8
48 g3

The white bishop is very strongly posted at d3, attacking the a6 and g6 pawns. It is also important that White has been able to prevent ...a6-a5. Black subsequently is obliged to avoid the exchange of rooks, since the bishop ending is won for White.

48 ... ♗b7
49 ♖g5 ♔f7
50 ♔f2 h4

Black tries to ease his defence somewhat by exchanging one pair of pawns.

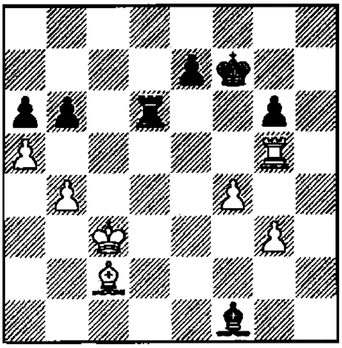
51 a4 hxg3+
52 hxg3 ♖d6
53 ♔e3 ♖e6+
54 ♔d2 ♖d6
55 ♔c3 ♖c6+
56 ♔b2 ♖d6
57 ♗c2 ♗f3
58 a5

An important move in White's plan. The weak black pawn at a6 is fixed.

58 ... ♗e2

Of course, Black does not wish to play 58...b5, when both of his queenside pawns are fixed on light squares. But 58...bxa5 was slightly better.

59 ♔c3 ♗f1?



Here again 59...bxa5 was a tougher defence. The move played leads to the loss of a pawn.

60 f5!

Black cannot now play 60...gxf5 61 ♖xf5+ ♖f6 62 ♖xf6+ and 63 axb6, and therefore he loses his g-pawn.

60 ... ♖c6+
61 ♔d2 bxa5
62 fxg6+

In the event of 62 ♖xg6 Black obtains counter-chances by 62...♖xc2+ 63 ♔xc2 axb4.

62 ... ♔g7
63 bxa5 ♗c4
64 ♗e4 ♖c7
65 ♔e3 ♗g8
66 ♔f4 ♗b3
67 ♖e5 ♔f6
68 ♖f5+ ♔g7
69 ♔g5 ♗c4
70 ♖e5 ♗b5

If the bishop moves anywhere along the a2-g8 diagonal, White plays 71 ♗d3.

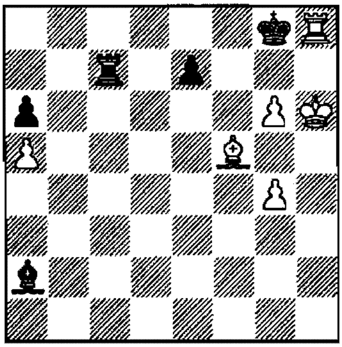
71 ♖e6 ♖c5+
72 ♔f4 ♖c7
73 ♔g5 ♖c5+
74 ♗f5 ♖c7
75 ♖e1

Now the white rook threatens to penetrate decisively via h1 to h7. Black cannot prevent this by 75...♗c6, on account of the pin by 76 ♖c1, while in the event of 75...♗c4, in order to answer 76 ♖h1 with 76...♗g8, the pin on the c-file by 76 ♖c1 is again decisive.

75 ... ♗e8

The last chance. Now on 76 ♖h1 Black plays 76...♗xg6 77 ♗xg6 ♖c5+ 78 ♗f5 g6. But White has no reason to hurry.

76 g4 ♗a4
77 ♖h1 ♗b3
78 ♖h7+ ♔g8
79 ♔h6 ♗a2
80 ♖h8+!



The concluding stroke, which enables the white pawn to queen.

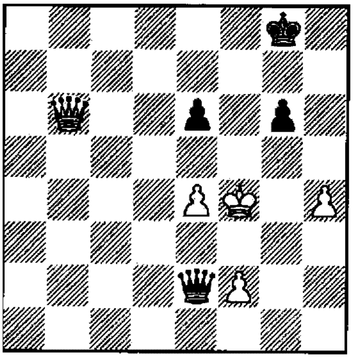
Black resigns.

On the theme of realising an advantage, I should like to give another example from my more recent experience.

Polugayevsky-Hellers

Haninge, 1990

After several hours of play the game has gone into a queen ending, where White has both a material, and a positional advantage, since the opponent has a weakness on the dark squares, and his separated pawns may easily come under attack. When I embarked on my analysis that evening, I naturally tried to exploit these factors. In particular, after Black's obvious reply 82...♔f7 I tried to find a way of penetrating with my king via g5, in order to win the g6 pawn.



But however much I struggled with the position, nothing came of it: attempts to penetrate into the opponent's position by numerous checks combined with various king manoeuvres would run up against a series of answering checks by the black queen, and I would have to start all over again.

In the end I realised that I could check the enemy king all night, and nothing would come of it. It was then that I asked myself a simple question: is White in fact acting sensibly, is he being guided by any sort of principles? And I immediately understood that I was not making any use at all of a basic procedure in queen endings: in realising a material advantage, you must coordinate your pieces such that, when blocking with your own queen a check by the opponent, the king, in this case Black's, should itself come under an answering check.

And the solution followed of its own accord. Instead of stubborn attempts to exploit the weakness of the g6 pawn, White must, on the contrary, remove it and thereby open up the position of the enemy king. An outwardly illogical decision proved to be the most logical!

On the basis of this, an overall plan for White was developed. It divides into three main parts:

(1) Endeavour, first of all, to tie down to the maximum the black queen, for which e4-e5 must be played, creating threats against f6.

(2) Exchange the h-pawn for the g-pawn and open up the position.

(3) Finally, advance the king to create threats against the opponent's king, not fearing enemy checks, since the method of 'answering checks' can be used.

As the reader will see, White was able to put his plan fully into action.

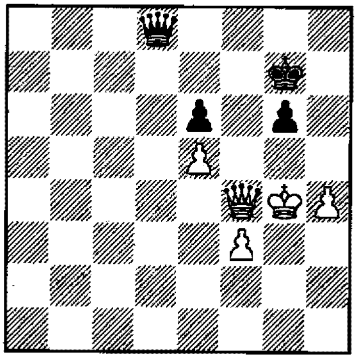
82 ... ♔f7
83 ♕d4 ♕h5
84 ♔g3 ♕b5
85 e5!

Thus the first step is made: White aims at f6, threatening ♕d4-f4-f6. The black queen will be forced to retreat in order to cover this square.

85 ... ♔g7
86 ♕f4 ♕d3+
87 f3 ♕d8

The active 87...♕d1 would have lost to 88 ♕f6+ ♔h7 89 ♕xe6 ♕g1+ 90 ♔f4 ♕h2+ 91 ♔e3 ♕g1+ 92 ♔e4 ♕b1+ 93 ♔d5 ♕b3+ 94 ♔d6, and gradually White moves his king away from the checks, until his queen is able to cover it on the seventh rank.

88 ♔g4



88 ... ♕e7

A piquant variation arises after 88...♕b6 89 ♕f6+ ♔h7 90 ♕f7+ ♔h6 91 ♕f8+ ♔h7 92 ♔g5! ♕g1+ (92...♕e3+ 93 ♕f4 ♕g1+ 94 ♔f6) 93 ♔f6 ♕g5+ 94 ♔xe6!, when unhappily for Black there is no stalemate.

89 h5 gxh5+
90 ♔xh5

The second part of the plan has been carried out. Now both kings are open, and White is already threatening 91 ♕g5+.

90 ... ♕e8+
91 ♔h4

Perhaps the only time that White can be criticised: simpler was 91 ♔g5! ♕g6+ 92 ♔h4 ♕h7+ 93 ♔g4 ♕g6+ 94 ♕g5 ♔h8 95 ♔h4!

91 ... ♕d7?!

Better chances were offered by 91...♔h7 92 ♕f6 ♕c8.

92 ♔g5 ♔g8

The exchange of queens would not have saved Black: 92...♕d8+ 93 ♕f6+ ♕xf6+ 94 exf6+ ♔f7 95 f4 ♔f8 96 ♔g6 ♔g8 97 f7+ ♔f8 98 ♔f6 e5 99 ♔xe5 ♔xf7 100 ♔f5.

93 ♔h5 ♔g7
94 ♕g5+ ♔f8

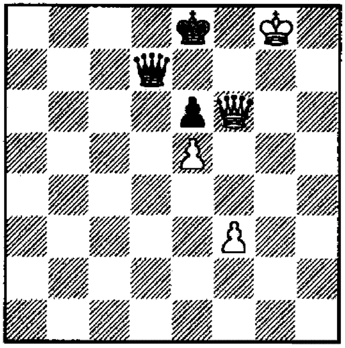
Or 94...♔h7 95 ♕g6+ ♔h8 96 ♔h6! ♕d2+ 97 ♕g5 ♕h2+ 98 ♕h5, and on the next check 98...♕d2+ White has the decisive 'counter-check' 99 ♔g6+, as mentioned earlier.

95 ♔h6!

The ring around the black king tightens, and his queen too is almost in *zugzwang*: in order to avoid running into an exchange, it is forced to abandon the seventh rank.

95 ... ♕d5
96 ♕f6+ ♔e8
97 ♔g7! ♕d7+
98 ♔g8

The third and decisive stage is carried out. White's pieces have broken into the opponent's position, and the threats to the black king combined with the advance of the f-pawn is quickly decisive.



98 ... ♕d5
99 f4 ♕g2+
100 ♕g7 ♕h3

If 100...♕e4 101 ♕f7+ ♔d8 102 ♕xe6 ♕xf4 103 ♕f6+, or 100...♕d5 101 ♕f7+ ♔d8 102 ♔g7 and 103 ♔f6.

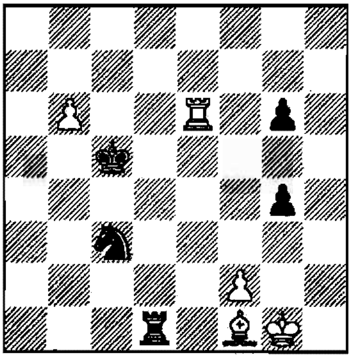
101 ♕g6+ ♔d8
102 ♔f7 ♔d7
103 f5 Black resigns

ZIG-ZAG OF FORTUNE

It very often happens that analysis is called on to establish not only the 'absolute truth'. Yes, at times an adjourned position may be lost, but one can nevertheless find at least a few nuances, which give some hope of saving the game. If the opponent does not spend his time during the adjournment as conscientiously as he might, and overlooks some subtleties, an imminent defeat can be averted, or a 'dead' draw transformed into a win. It was on such 'additional possibilities' in the position that I planned the resumption of the following game.

Polugayevsky-Hartston
Las Plamas 1974

The tournament was drawing to a close, and I very much needed a win, but objectively speaking it wasn't there.



Of course, White has the advantage, but there is too little material on the board, and it is sufficient for Black merely to eliminate White's passed pawn, by giving up both of his pawns for it.

It was in such 'barren waters' that in my analysis I managed to find an amusing trap – essentially White's only chance.

41 b7

The sealed move was obvious: on 41 ♔g2 Black draws immediately by 41...♘d5 42 b7 ♖b1, when the b-pawn is lost in view of the threat of 43...♘f4+.

41 ... ♖b1

42 ♖e5+

'Correct play' – 42 ♖e7, is again unpromising, but not because of the plausible 42...♔c6 43 ♔h2!, when the white bishop goes to g2, defending the b7 pawn, but in view of the intermediate move 42...♘d5 43 ♖g7, and now 43...♔c6, when 44 ♔h2 and 45 ♗g2 no longer achieves anything.

White therefore resorts to a crafty check found during analysis.

42 ... ♔d6?

Here it is, the neglect of detail in the work on the adjourned position. It is natural that Black should not care for the continuation 42...♔d4 43 ♖e7 ♘d5 44 ♖g7, and if 44...♔c5, then the familiar regrouping 45 ♔h2 ♔c6 46 ♗g2 is completed just in time. But he should have played 42...♔c6, with a clear draw after 43 ♖g5 ♔xb7 44 ♖xg6 etc.

But my opponent decided, just in case, to keep his king a little closer to his pawns. And it was here that the prepared 'mine' exploded.

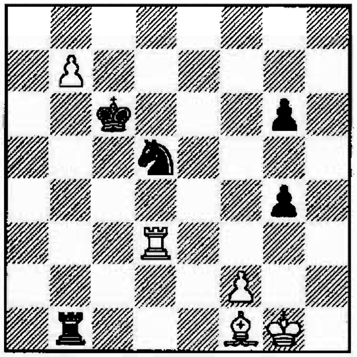
43 ♖e3 ♘d5?

Continuing the same tactics of natural moves. It was still not too late to draw by the 'flank' move 43...♘a4.

44 ♖d3!

It would appear that as yet nothing terrible has happened. Black is not bound to blunder away a piece by 44...♖xb7 45 ♖xd5+ ♔xd5 46 ♗g2+, but can first move his king out of the pin, which is what he does.

44 ... ♔c6



45 ♖d1!!

By breaking the pin on the first rank, White practically drives the black rook to b7, after which the familiar geometric motif comes into play. Incidentally, 45 ♔h2 achieves nothing here in view of 45...♘f4!, when g2 is inaccessible to the bishop.

45 ... ♖xb7

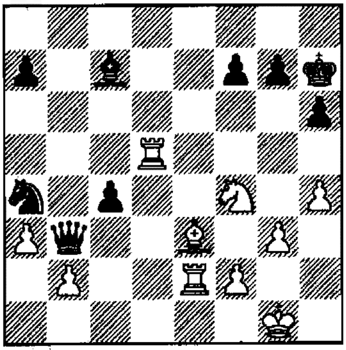
46 ♖xd5 Black resigns

In this case it was my analysis that was the more accurate and resourceful. But sometimes – not often, fortunately – it has been I who have lost the analytical adjournment battle. And each time I have been able to give an exact diagnosis of the mistake: which of the principles of working on an adjourned position has been broken.

Not surprisingly, such occurrences stick in my memory, along with the most happy ones.

Polugayevsky-Bronstein

34th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1967



This position, which was reached after five hours of lively and interesting play, cannot be called anything but crazy. To the necessity of making the usual assessment as to which is stronger here, the queen or the two rooks, the following factors had to be added: the weakness of the b2 pawn and the strength of the c4 pawn, the remote position of the black knight, the restricted position of the black king, and many others. It is not surprising that the analysis too proved to be highly complicated. And I made a mistake: I continued analysing right up to the very resumption of the game, and even a few minutes before the opening of the envelope I had still not put away my pocket set. The result was extreme fatigue, and the very first surprise, although a fairly simple one, appeared to me like one of the mysteries of the sphinx.

Since then more than a quarter of a century has passed, and I invariably recall this game when I am faced with the necessity of analysing a very complicated position. I concentrate to the utmost on my analysis, and devote every minute to it, but some two hours before the resumption I put the board to one side. Of course, the position remains in my mind, and the analysis continues, but by no means so intensively and not so tiringly. And it is perhaps for this reason that, on several occasions, it has been in these last few minutes that I have been able to spot mistakes that have been made.

As for the present game, I sealed the natural move,

41 ♖d7

I assumed that the reply would be no less natural –

41 ... ♗e5

and on the way to the hotel I thought my position to be rather poor. But then I found the reply 42 ♗xa7, and gradually came to the conclusion that White's chances were no worse.

I based my analysis on possible variations such as 42...♗xb2 43 ♖e8 (but not 43 ♖xf7? c3 44 ♖f8 c2 45 ♖ee8 c1=♕+ and 46...♕xf4, with a decisive material advantage) 43...c3 44 ♖dd8 g5 45 ♖h8+ ♔g7 46 ♗d4+ f6 47 ♘d5, or 42...♗xf4 43 gxf4 ♘xb2 44 ♖ee7.

On the resumption these initial moves did in fact occur, and after

42 ♗xa7

Bronstein thought for a long time. Then, almost reluctantly, he played

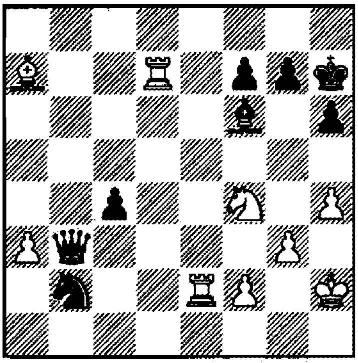
42 ... ♗f6

This is a weak move, in my opinion, and should afford White excellent chances. But I had not considered it in my analysis, and at the board, in my tired state, I was unable to refute it, although initially I set off on the correct path.

43 ♔h2!

Necessary, since 43 ♖xf7 is refuted by 43...c3 44 ♖f8 cxb2 45 ♖ee8 b1=♕+ 46 ♔h2 g5, when Black is 'only' a queen up.

43 ... ♘xb2



44 ♖xf7?

A serious mistake, which loses the game. The rook approaches too close to the black king, which at the decisive moment comes out to g6, thereby winning a necessary tempo by the attack. White could have gained an advantage by 44 ♘d5!, when the black bishop falls, after which the two rooks supported by the bishop from d4 build up a very strong attack. This is why the king had to be moved a move earlier: Black is now denied a saving (and simultaneously, winning) queen check at d1.

How then should Black play? The difficulty of his position is illustrated by the variation 44...♔g6 45 ♘xf6 gxf6 46 ♗d4 c3 (46...♘d3 47 ♖d6) 47 ♖c7, and wherever the knight moves, Black loses his c-pawn: 47...♘c4 48 ♗xc3 ♕xc3 49 ♖e4; 47...♘a4(d1) 48 ♗xc3 ♘xc3 49 ♖e3, while 47...♕d1 is risky in view of 48 ♖e4.

After the continuation in the game, everything is clear: White is too late.

44 ... ♘d3
45 ♘d5 ♔g6

On 46 ♖c7 Black can now reply 46...♗e5, with an additional threat: 47...♘xf2.

46 ♖d7 ♘e5
47 ♖c7 ♕xa3

As if to emphasise that the white rooks, disunited and lacking in coordination, are no threat to anyone...

48 ♘xf6 gxf6
49 ♗e3 ♕d3
50 ♖a2 ♕f1

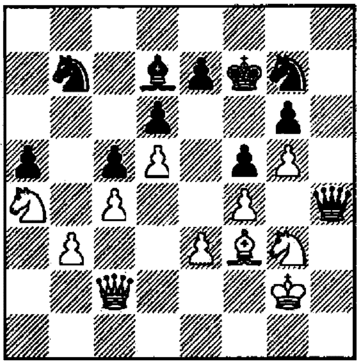
The classic combination of queen and knight goes onto the attack. Now Black simply does not need his passed c-pawn: he threatens mate by 51...♘f3 or 51...♘g4.

51 g4 ♘xg4+
52 ♔g3 ♘e5
53 ♔h2 ♘f3+
54 ♔g3 ♘e1
55 ♔f4 ♕g2

White resigns: there is no defence against mate by the queen at f3, or by the knight at d3.

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS IN SPAIN

Polugayevsky-Filip
Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970



The board is partitioned off by the pawn chains, and for the time being this gives the position a closed nature. But since White has a clear and stable advantage – in view of his greater space and Black's weakness at a5 – it would seem that all he has to do is to regroup his forces appropriately, when things will become even more difficult for Black.

However, when I came to check the position, it turned out that this was not quite so. Although White's plans are on the whole straightforward, if they are carried out directly, each time they encounter serious resistance by the opponent, and I soon realised that a completely concrete method was required to increase and realise my advantage. Many hours of burning the midnight oil convinced me that without this it was impossible to win from the adjourned position.

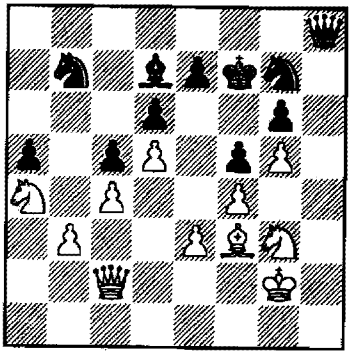
The point is that White is unable to win the weak a5 pawn, and the only possibility of breaking into the opponent's position is to strike in the centre with e3-e4, after which Black is saddled with an additional weakness at g6. But this breakthrough is possible only under completely specific circumstances, otherwise the black pieces establish themselves at f5, when there is no question of a White win.

Therefore White begins combining his efforts, so as first to 'draw the attention' of the black pieces to other problems, lure them into the most unfavourable positions, and only then break through in the centre. But what problems? It was this question that I managed to answer in my analysis, and what's more, White's threats prove to be very definite. For instance, he is already intending to win the a5 pawn, by carrying out the knight manoeuvre ♘a4-b6-c8-a7-c6, and by placing his queen at a2.

In order to forestall this, the black queen must abandon the h4 square, where it is on the whole quite well placed, after which all Black's pieces will be restricted to the back two ranks. Then White himself will seize the only open file, the h-file, and by threatening to invade with his queen, will force Black to weaken in some way his control over f5.

Strangely enough, all these abstract ideas are manifested in completely concrete form.

42...♛h8. My second and I, grandmaster Isaac Boleslavsky, considered this to be the only move – otherwise the manoeuvre ♘a4-b6-c8-a7-c6 is decisive – and we began our analysis from this initial position.



First we tried the thematic 43 ♘b6 ♛d8 (after 43...♝e8 the white knight completes its manoeuvre without hindrance) 44 ♘xd7 (eliminating one of the defenders of the f5 square) 44...♛xd7 45 e4, but it turned out that after 45...♞d8! 46 exf5 ♘xf5 47 ♘xf5 (47 ♗g4 fails to 47...♞e3+; even the preliminary 47 ♔f2 does not save White from this tactical possibility) 47...♛xf5 48 ♕xf5 gxf5, although the ending is clearly in White's favour, there is no win. At any rate, Boleslavsky and I were unable to find one. E.g. 49 ♗h5+ ♚g7 50 ♗e8 e5! 51 dxe6 ♞xe6 52 ♔g3 ♞d4, and White is unable to improve his position.

Black's defensive lines are also impregnable if White avoids capturing on f5, and in the variation just given plays 46 e5. Then comes 46...♚g8, and how is he to effect a breakthrough? The preparation of a sacrifice on f5 is prevented by pressure with the black queen down the b-file.

We attempted to improve this variation by playing 45 ♕b1, instead of the immediate 45 e4. Now if Black should be tempted into attacking the b3 pawn with 45...♛c7 46 ♕h1 ♛b6, White pierces his opponent's defences: 47 ♕h7 ♛xb3 48 e4 (also sufficient is 48 ♗h5 ♛b2+ 49 ♔h3 gxh5 50 ♘xf5, or 48...gxh5 49 g6+ ♚f6 50 ♕h6, with the threat of mate at g5) 48...fxe4 49 ♗g4.

But Black is by no means obliged to bother himself over such a trifle as the b3 pawn. He can go over to passive defence: 45...♔g8 46 ♕h1 ♕e8 47 ♕h6 ♕f7 48 e4 ♘d8, and neither after the capture on f5, nor after the advance e4-e5, is it clear what to do next.

However much Boleslavsky and I racked our brains over this position, however much we analysed it night after night, we were unable to find a clear win. But meanwhile I sensed that the game had been adjourned in a position won for White, and that to tip the scales in his favour he still had to add a little something...

In search of this 'little something' we rejected the direct 43 ♘b6 followed by e3-e4, deciding to retain this as a threat, and began studying the more flexible continuation 43 ♕b1.

Apart from the basic aim of switching the queen to the h-file, this move also nips in the bud the possibility of Black capturing with his bishop on a4: White's possession of the b-file then promises him a straightforward win.

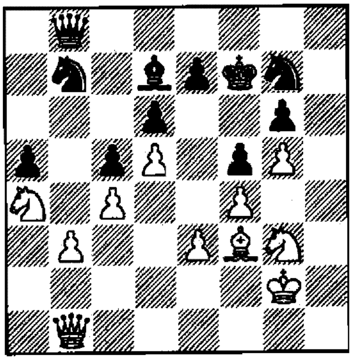
Here at first we thought that our goal had been achieved. The threat of ♘a4-b6 with the variations given above is still there, since the queen, while no less strongly posted, has retreated from c2, where it came under attack by the black knight from e3. And after the natural 43...♕d8 (so as not to allow the knight in at b6) 44 ♕h1 ♔g8 45 ♕h6 ♗e8 46 e4 ♕d7 (on 46...♕c8 White wins either by 47 ♘b6, or by 47 exf5 ♘xf5 48 ♘b6 ♘xh6 49 ♘xc8 ♘f7 50 ♘xe7+ ♔g7 51 ♗e4 ♘fd8 52 f5; the attempt at counterplay is similarly doomed to failure: 46...e6 47 dxe6 ♘xe6 48 exf5 ♘xf4+ 49 ♔h2, and the black king cannot escape from the mating net) 47 ♘b6 ♕c7 the pseudo-sacrifice 48 exf5 ♕xb6 49 fxg6 gives White an irresistible attack: 49...♗xg6 50 ♕xg6 ♕xb3 51 f5 ♕b2+ (or 51...♕c2+ 52 ♔h3 ♔f8 53 ♗e4 ♕d2 54 f6 exf6 55 ♕xf6+ ♔e8 56 ♗g6+, with the elimination of, at minimum, the entire black cavalry) 52 ♔h3 ♔f8 53 f6 exf6 54 gxf6 ♘e8 55 ♗h5 ♕xf6 56 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 57 ♕d7+, with the same result.

But when we had worked all this out, I suddenly found an amazing way for Black to resist. It lay in the move 43...♕b8!

It occurred to me after reasoning of the following nature: 'How can it be that we found so many ways of defending after the knight invasion at b6, and then White had only to find an intermediate move, albeit a strong one, for Black's position to literally collapse?! It happens very rarely that way. We must have overlooked something...'

If one's thinking is directed along the correct lines, it makes the searching easier. We all know that it is much simpler, for instance, to carry out a combination when we definitely know that it is there, than to sense the possibility during a practical game.

And thus the 'prescribed' defensive move 43...♕b8 was found.

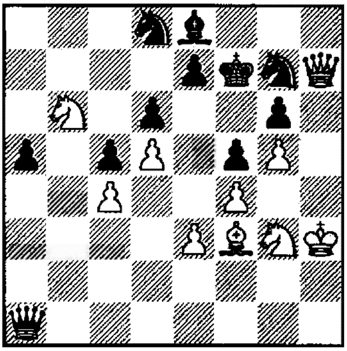


The move looks rather ridiculous, but is in fact perfectly sensible. Black leaves the square d8 open for his knight, and economises on a mass of time for creating counterplay on the b-file. We suffered considerable anxiety, before we were able to find a very complicated, but nevertheless convincing enough way to win. After 44 ♕h1 White is successful in the two main variations that Black can choose.

In the first of these Black attempts to prevent the invasion of the queen at h7: 44.. ♔g8 45 ♕h6 ♗e8 (the immediate counterattack, 45...♘d8, proves successful for Black if White captures the g6 pawn, but it encounters an elegant refutation: 46 ♗h5 gxh5 47 g6 ♘f7 48 ♕h7+ ♔f8 49 gxf7, and Black has to resign in view of one further straightforward tactical blow on the theme of diversion: 49...♔xf7 50 ♘b6! ♕xb6 51 ♘xh5) 46 e4 fxe4 47 ♗xe4 ♘d8 48 ♗xg6 ♗xg6 49 ♕xg6 ♕xb3 50 ♘h5 ♕a2+ 51 ♔h3 ♕a1 52 ♕xg7+ (unfortunately, White has nothing better) 52... ♕xg7 53 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 54 ♔g4, and in this ending, which we also had to analyse in detail, White finally wins: 54...e5 (otherwise White advances his pawns to f5 and g6, and sends his king off to win the a5 pawn) 55 fxe5 (after 55 dxe6 ♘xe6 56 f5 ♘d4 White still has to overcome a number of technical difficulties) 55...dxe5 56 d6! ♘b7 57 d7 ♔f7 58 ♘xc5 ♘d8 59 ♔f5, and Black is helpless against the passed pawns.

The win is even more difficult in the second variation, where Black ignores the invasion of the white queen, and immediately creates counterplay: 44...♘d8 45 ♕h7 ♕xb3 46 ♘h5! (in this position 46 ♗h5 would now be a mistake – 46...gxh5 47 g6+ ♔f6 48 ♕h6 ♘f7!, or 47 ♘xh5 ♗xa4, and the black king escapes from the mating net via the vacated square d7) 46...♕a2+ (capture of the knight at h5 allows mate in two) 47 ♔h3 ♕a1 48 ♘b6 ♗e8 49 ♘g3!! (*see diagram next column*).

A startling move! 'The Moor has done his deed' – ensured the intrusion of his colleague at b6, and now, by retreating, he forces the win in surprising fashion. It is true that this operation has cost a pawn, but on the other hand the black king is now securely blocked in by his own pieces, in many instances the white knight can penetrate to c8 with additional threats, and, most important, it is very difficult for Black to avert the knock-out blow 50 ♘xf5.

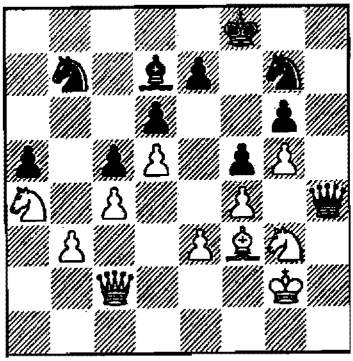


Thus 49...♕b1, for instance, is decisively met by the thematic 50 e4, while in the event of 49...e6 White continues 50 ♘c8 (the fruits of the manoeuvre ♘g3-h5-g3) 50... ♗d7 (on 50...♘b7 White has 51 dxe6+ ♔xe6 52 ♗xb7, if there is nothing better) 51 ♘xd6+ (White has no reason to seek adventures in attacks of the type 51 ♘h5 ♗xc8 52 ♘f6 ♕f1+ 53 ♗g2 ♕e1 54 ♕g8+ ♔e7 55 ♕xg7+ ♘f7, when the opponent gains counter-chances) 51...♔e7 52 ♘b5, and Black has a sad choice between 52...a4 53 d6+ ♔f7 54 ♘h5 a3 55 ♘f6, and 52... ♗xb5 53 cxb5 ♔f7 54 b6 e5 55 d6 e4 56 ♗e2 ♕a2 57 ♕h8.

Thus in all these – and in many other highly complex variations – the idea of the sacrifice at h5 is normally decisive. We studied it most thoroughly, and I am convinced that at the board it would be practically impossible to find the 'pendulum' manoeuvre ♘g3-h5-g3. To this day the winning method outlined in the analysis seems to me to be the most exact.

But on the resumption Filip's very first move came as a terrible disappointment to me. Masses of effort had been devoted to the analysis, several sleepless nights had been spent, the most subtle of subtleties had been found, and my opponent reduced it all to nought.

42 ... ♔f8?



In this way Black simply parts with his a5 pawn, after which the win becomes merely a question of time. But I was so upset that after the automatically-played

43 ♘b6 ♗e8

I thought for a long time, and suddenly began even to doubt my own powers: could I capitalise on my extra pawn?

Then, it is true, everything fell into place.

44 ♕c3 ♕h7
45 ♕a1

I could also have started the knight dance immediately, ♘b6-c8-a7-c6, but I wanted to win the a5 pawn 'at my own convenience'.

45 ... ♔g8
46 ♘c8 ♔f8
47 ♘a7 ♗f7
48 ♕a4 ♗e8
49 ♘c6

Threatening the intrusion of the queen at b5, when White wins the a5 pawn while retaining his strong knight at c6.

49 ... e5

Played in the search for at least some sort of activity. Here White calculated the winning variation through to the end.

50 fxe5 dxe5

There is no time for 50...♕h4, in view of 51 ♕b5.

51 ♕a1

This is somewhat cleaner and more accurate than 51 ♕b5 ♘h5, although there too the win is not far away.

51 ... ♗xc6

51...e4 fails to 52 ♕f6+.

52 dxc6 ♘d6
53 ♕xe5 ♘ge8
54 ♕xc5 ♕e7
55 ♕d4

A check at h8 is threatened, while on 55...♕xg5 either 56 c7 or 56 c5 is immediately decisive. Even so, in time trouble I was rather too hasty: 55 ♗d5 is simpler, when there is literally nothing that Black can move; 55...♘c7 is answered by 56 ♕xa5, if there is nothing better.

55 ... ♘f7
56 ♗d5 ♘e5

Black could have held out somewhat longer by capturing on the g5 pawn with his queen.

57 ♕h4 ♕g7
58 ♕f4 ♘d3
59 ♕d4 ♘e5

The position is repeated, but with the difference that the g5 pawn is no longer attacked, and White can bring his knight into play.

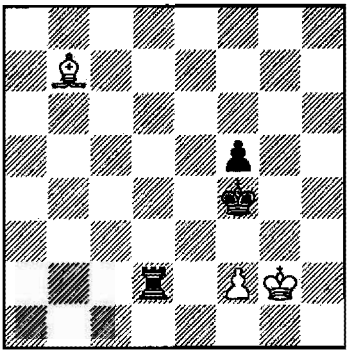
60 ♘e2 ♘c7
61 ♘f4 ♔e8

and without waiting for the obvious 62 ♘xg6, **Black resigned.**

WITHOUT ANY PROMPTINGS BY THEORY

Gligoric-Polugayevsky
IBM Tournament, Amsterdam 1970

This apparently extremely simple – not to say elementary – ending gave me a mass of anxiety, but also enormous pleasure.



White happily sacrificed the exchange to go into it, and was firmly convinced that the position was a so-called 'dead' draw. True, in books on the endgame I had never seen this exact position, but, as I was leaving the tournament hall after the adjournment, I too was inclined to think that this was so. What could prevent the bishop from manoeuvring along the long light-square diagonal, and how could the black pawn be advanced to f3, thus severely restricting the white king and obtaining the possibility of either creating mating threats, or winning the f2 pawn?

Of course, if White himself were to play f2-f3, defending his pawn with his bishop, Black would drive the enemy king a sufficient distance away, and then by giving up the exchange for a pawn would achieve a won pawn ending. But here all three white pieces co-ordinate ideally one with another, and at first I did not even want to waste any effort on a second adjournment, especially since my tournament standing permitted me to avoid waging an exhausting battle for every half point.

But while still on the way to the hotel, tossing the position to and fro in my mind, I suddenly sensed a kind of perplexity. It occurred to me, for instance, that the long-range white bishop could be forced off the 'main' road, and that on the shorter diagonals it could become rather restricted. This meant that I had to forget about prudent economy of effort, and get down to analysis.

And, on setting up the position, I became engrossed in its secrets, and in literally every variation discovered subtleties of which I would never even have dreamed.

I found straight away that, if the black pawn were at f4, then in the given situation it would indeed be a 'dead' draw: the bishop could not be driven off. But standing at f5 the pawn, firstly, does not deprive its own king of the adjacent square, and secondly, it restricts the scope of the white bishop. And this 'trifle' is, evidently, of decisive importance. And for White it is not at all easy to draw, even if it is possible at all.

A lengthy study of the position enabled me to outline three stages in my plan:

1) Drive the bishop off the a8-h1 diagonal.

2) Pursue the bishop with the rook, so as to restrict it to the maximum.

3) Obtain the ideal position, so as to make the decisive advance of the black pawn to f3 via the 'transit' square f4.

The first two parts of the plan were found to be either quick or slow, but certainly feasible. I racked my brains for a long time over a way of achieving the third part, until I realised that without the 'assistance' of my opponent it was not possible. So that, as regards establishing the absolute truth, the position must nevertheless be considered drawn, but with the important proviso that the defender must avoid a mass of pitfalls.

73 ... ♖d3
74 ♗c6 ♖c3

By making an unusual 'rook triangle', Black gives his opponent the move, and the bishop has to abandon the sacred diagonal.

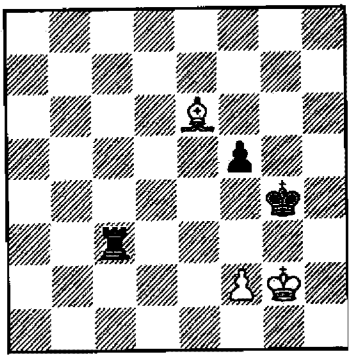
75 ♗d5

A not altogether happy reply; White should have fought to the end for the diagonal, and tried 75 ♗b7. But even then, after

75...♔g4 76 ♗d5 (with the idea of answering 76...f4 with 77 ♗e6+, and then returning to d5) Black achieves his aim: 76...♖d3 77 ♗b7 (if 77 ♗c6, then 77...f4 and 78... f3+, winning immediately) 77...♖b3, and now either 78 ♗d5 ♖c3! (giving White the move) 79 ♗b7 f4, or 78 ♗c6 ♖a3! (the key square again for the rook's 'linear triangle') 79 ♗d5 ♖c3 (or 79 ♗b7 ♖d3), and the bishop must abandon the long diagonal.

Therefore the move played merely allows Black to carry out the first part of his plan more quickly.

75 ... ♔g4
76 ♗e6



The second stage begins, that of restricting the bishop's mobility.

First of all, Black must ensure that it does not return to the a8-h1 diagonal.

76 ... ♖c5
77 ♗b3 ♔f4
78 ♗d1

With the intention if possible of returning to f3. White could have pinned his hopes on 'guerilla warfare', and immediately moved into Black's rearguard: 78 ♗e6. But Gligoric was evidently afraid of 78...♔e4, when in view of the threat of the pawn march ...f5-f4-f3, White has no move apart from 79 ♗f7 (79 ♗b3 f4; 79 ♗d7 f4 80 ♗g4 ♖g5). And as yet he did not wish to be forced into a situation where there was only one move.

78 ... ♖c6!

The bishop cannot now go to f3, in view of 79...♖g6+. By switching to the 6th rank, the black rook increases its functions: it not only pursues the bishop, but also in some cases disturbs the white king.

79 ♗h5

All the time White has to act very carefully. For instance, it is already dangerous for him to keep the bishop close to his king; 79 ♗e2 ♖g6+ 80 ♔f1 ♔e4 81 ♗d1 ♖d6 82 ♗h5 (82 ♗c2+ loses immediately to 82... ♔f3) 82...♖h6 83 ♗f7! (after 83 ♗d1 ♖h1+ 84 ♔e2 the white king is driven onto the 'long side' of the pawn, and this gives Black additional chances, while 83 ♗e8? ♔f3 leads to capitulation: 84 ♔g1 ♖e6 85 ♗d7 ♖e1+ 86 ♔h2 f4), and though White is not yet lost, he is literally walking a tightrope.

Therefore White takes control of g6, in his turn restricting the rook.

79 ... ♖h6
80 ♗d1

Directed in particular against 80...♔e4, which would have followed in reply to 80 ♗e8 or 80 ♗f7.

80 ... ♖g6+
81 ♔f1 ♖d6

Very slowly Black tightens the noose still further. White can move his bishop only along one relatively short diagonal, d1-h5, since 82 ♗c2 (b3, a4), for instance, is met decisively by 82...♔f3. True, for the moment this is sufficient, since Black too is unable to strengthen his position.

82 ♗h5 ♖d7

The bishop is restricted, but not yet to a catastrophic degree, and so Black, instead of using the 6th rank as a base, tries to begin manoeuvres along the 7th rank. The reason? Instead of g6, which is sometimes inaccessible, he wishes to obtain the always accessible square g7, which may prove useful.

Incidentally, Black could also have played 82...♖h6, when he achieves advantages referred to earlier after 83 ♗d1 ♖h1+, or 83 ♗f7 ♔e4. But in the latter case there is no definite win, and Black keeps this possibility in reserve.

83 ♔g2 ♖g7+
84 ♔f1 ♔e4
85 ♗d1

Black has achieved maximum activity, but the victorious march of the pawn is still not possible, and he continues to seek an opportunity, while chasing the bishop. And White too has to defend accurately...

85 ... ♖d7
86 ♗h5

Once again the only move (86 ♗e2 f4; 86 ♗c2 ♔f3), but alas, still suffcient. Incidentally, it is also dangerous to move the king, e.g. 86 ♔e2 ♖c7, and White is in *zugzwang*.

86 ... ♖h7

Intending now after 87 ♗d1 to continue 87...♖h1+ 88 ♔e2 ♔f4, when the harmony between the white pieces is destroyed. On 89 ♗a4, for instance, 89...♖a1 is unpleasant, and if 90 ♗d7, then 90...♖c1 with the threat of 91...♖c2+ 92 ♔f1 ♔f3, while in the event of 91 ♗e6 Black achieves his goal by 91...♔e5 and the subsequent advance of his pawn. Of course, White can also play differently, but it will be apparent that after 87 ♗d1 his difficulties are increased.

In this variation Black himself would have had to avoid falling into a tempting trap: 88...♖xd1? 89 ♔xd1 ♔f3 90 ♔e1 ♔g2, when 91 f4! leads to a draw.

87 ♗e8

The bishop's possibilities are extremely restricted, but it is not clear that Black can further improve his position. He therefore comes to a new decision. Since he has 'squeezed out' the maximum with his rook on the 7th rank, Black changes its 'place of residence', and switches it to the 8th rank. But before carrying out this plan, he returns it to the 6th rank, at the same time both masking his intention, and also lulling his opponent's vigilance, and hoping, finally, to see how the bishop 'behaves' on its new diagonal.

87 ... ♖h6
88 ♗a4 ♖d6
89 ♔g2 ♔f4

We have already seen a similar position, the only difference being that the bishop has moved from h5 to a4.

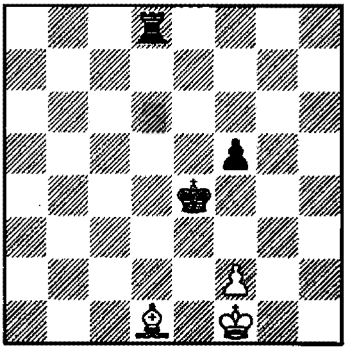
90 ♗e8 ♖b6
91 ♗a4 ♖a6
92 ♗d1 ♖g6+
93 ♔f1 ♖d6
94 ♗h5 ♖h6
95 ♗f7 ♔e4
96 ♗b3 ♖c6
97 ♔g2 ♖c1
98 ♗f7 ♖c7
99 ♗h5

White defends accurately. It only required one careless move, 99 ♗a2, for him to lose after 99...♖b7: the bishop has no square from which to parry the inevitable 100...f4 by checking the black king!

99 ... ♖g7+
100 ♔f1 ♖g8

The idea behind switching the rook to the back rank is that in many cases the bishop is deprived of the key e8 square, from where it has moved both to a4 and and to h5.

101 ♗d1 ♖d8



102 ♗a4

White fails to sense the difference between the position of the rook on the 6th, 7th and 8th ranks, and misses the only saving move in this position, 102 ♗h5, with the follow-up 102...♖h8 103 ♗f7!, and if 103...f4, then 104 ♔g2. Here Black fails to achieve his goal after 104...f3+ 105 ♔g3 ♖h6 106 ♗e8, when the rook is unable to guard simultaneously the squares c6 and g6, and also drive away the white king with check from g7. A positional draw!

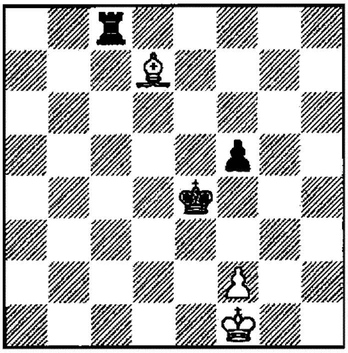
By moving his bishop off to the other side, White comes to grief.

102 ... ♖c8!

It is here that the position of the rook on the 8th rank tells! The bishop is denied the square e8, via which at the necessary moment (after the advance of the black pawn) it could give a check at g6.

103 ♗d7

103 ♗d1 is decisively met by 103...f4 104 ♔g2 ♖g8+ and 105...f3, and 103 ♗b3 by 103...f4 104 ♔g2 ♖c7 followed by 105...♖g7+ and 106...f3.



103 ... ♖c5!!

Only now is the point of Black's plan revealed.

This switching of the rook to an 'ambush' position is directed against that same manoeuvre of the bishop via e8 to h5. Thus on 104 ♗e8 Black wins by 104...f4 105 ♗g6+ ♔f3, while after 104 ♔g2 he has the decisive 104...f4 105 ♗g4 ♖g5.

Now the third stage of the plan commences: the ideal position for the march of the pawn has been achieved.

104 ♔e2 f4
105 ♗e8 f3+
106 ♔d2 ♖d5+
107 ♔c2 ♔f4
108 ♗f7 ♖g5

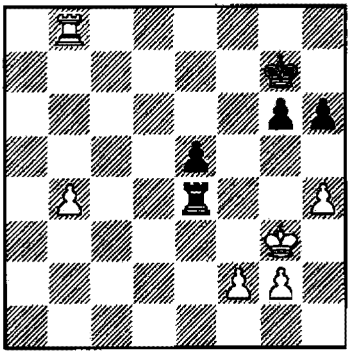
White resigned in view of the inevitable loss of his pawn: 109 ♔d2 ♖g2 110 ♔e1 ♖g1+ 111 ♔d2 ♖f1.

Of course, strictly speaking the ending was drawn. But to achieve this, exceptional vigilance and accuracy were demanded of White, together with scrupulous analysis. As the course of the game showed, it proved to be not at all simple to meet these demands.

ROOK ENDINGS CAN BE WON AFTER ALL!

Polugayevsky-Vasyukov

34th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1967



The resumption of this game took a very simple course, but how worried I was as I made my way to the Rustaveli Theatre, the stage of which had been given over to chess! Firstly, because the Championship was an elimination event for the Interzonal

Tournament; secondly, because I felt somewhat feverish, and successes were alternating with misfortunes; and thirdly, because in this game I had held an overwhelming positional advantage from the very opening, but had several times missed an opportunity to increase it decisively. And as a result the win for White hung by a thread – as Savielly Tartakower once wittily remarked: 'all rook endings are drawn'. In particular, as I knew from my own experience, endings with an extra b-pawn.

What's more, the saving procedure for the defending side has been studied no less thoroughly that the multiplication tables. While the passed pawn, in the given situation White's, is advancing to b6, Black waits. Then, when the white king heads for the b6 pawn, Black picks up something on the kingside, after which he sacrifices his rook for White's passed pawn, and advances his own newly-formed passed pawns, supported by his king. White is normally forced to return his extra rook and be satisfied with a draw.

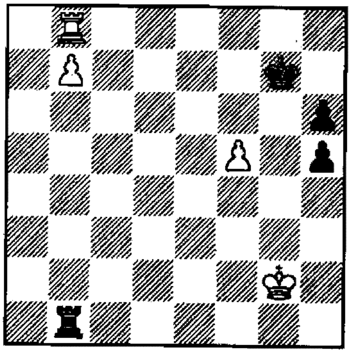
Such are the normal plans for the two sides. And in order to disturb this practised scheme, it was necessary to find something additional in the position, that little extra weight that would tip the scales.

But as I thought over my sealed move, I couldn't see it.

42 b5

Only when I began my analysis did I discover a nuance in this position, and a highly important one.

The point is that, by advancing his pawn to b7, White ties down the opposing king and rook, and then, by an encircling manoeuvre with his king, utilising once again the 'triangulation' method, he wins the e5 pawn. But even after this, victory can be achieved only if he creates a passed pawn on the f-file.



By playing f5-f6+, White prevents the black king from moving between the squares g7 and h7, and after ...♔f7 he wins by ♖h8, while in the event of ...♔xf6 he has the opportunity for a deadly check: ♖f8+ and b7-b8=♕.

In the adjourned position the white f-pawn has no opposite number, but the black g6 pawn stands in its path. This pawn could have been cleared out of the way immediately, by the dagger-blow 42 h5! If Black captures on h5 or allows White to take on g6, White's idea of creating a second passed pawn is achieved in pure form, and a theoretically won ending is reached.

During the game I was intending to play h4-h5 on my next move, my 43rd, but in my analysis I became aware that such a hope was not feasible. After all, it was now Black's turn to move, and before posting his rook behind the white b-pawn, he could radically prevent all his opponent's aggressive intentions on the kingside, by first playing 42...h5!

If in this case the white king were to head for the b-pawn, play would proceed as described at the very beginning, and (I have to ask you to take my word for this) White would at best be one tempo away from a win. However much I racked my brains, I could not find a win for White.

If instead White wins the e5 pawn by 'triangulation' – which is possible – then, in contrast to the situation earlier, after f2-f3 and g2-g4 he succeeds in creating a passed pawn only on the g- or h-file, which is not good enough to win.

But Black passed over this opportunity, having failed to foresee something in his analysis. I do not know the precise reason, of course, but I will venture to suggest this: the time he spent on this position was less than that spent by White, and he did not analyse every move at his disposal.

42 ... ♖b4?

Here I – imperceptibly, as far as possible – breathed a sigh of relief. This move, although so natural, leaves Black on the edge of the abyss.

43 h5! gxh5

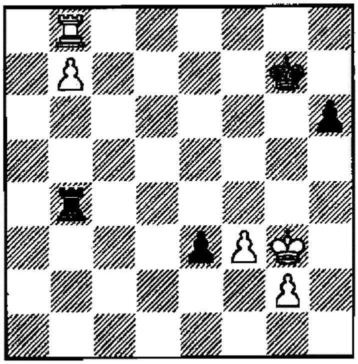
After 43...g5 both the f5 square and the h6 pawn are weakened, which gives White additional trumps.

44 b6

In his delight, White promptly commits an erroneous transposition of moves. It was essential first to play 44 ♔f3, immediately aiming his sights on the black e-pawn, which has been left in complete isolation, and planning to put into effect the white king's triangulation manoeuvre found in analysis, although even here there is no 100% guarantee that White's position is won.

44 ... h4+?

Black fails to exploit the opportunity presented to him. Saving chances were offered by 44...♖b3+, when an amazing, study-like draw results after 45 f3 e4 46 b7 (or 46 ♔f2 ♖b2+ 47 ♔e3 ♖xg2 48 b7 ♖b2 49 fxe4 h4, and the black h-pawn is no weaker than either of its white opponents) 46...h4+! (but not 46...e3 47 f4 e2 48 ♔f2), and after 47 ♔f2 Black is saved by the straightforward 47...h3; and after 47 ♔xh4 e3 48 ♔g3 by the highly subtle 48...♖b4!!, when White is in *zugzwang*.



He has no move other than 49 f4 (the exchange of the b7 pawn for the e3 pawn leads to a theoretically drawn ending), but then 49...e2 50 ♔f2 ♖xf4+ 51 ♔xe2 ♖b4 once again gives White nothing.

Therefore, in reply to 44...♖b3+ White would have had to try 45 ♔h4. But after 45...e4! (45...♖b2, however, is also possible) the tempting 46 ♔xh5 leads only to a draw after the quiet retreat 46...♖b4!!, when White is doomed to carrying on the fight 'a king down', since he dare not step onto the 'mined' 4th rank. The thematic 47 f4 is just one tempo too slow: 47...e3 48 f5 e2, with a draw after 49 ♖e8 ♖xb6 50 ♖xe2 ♖b1. Also, 47 g4 does not change anything: the further advance g4-g5 is all the same impossible, in view of the reply ...♖b5.

In the game, however, Black maintains material equality for a time, and... loses.

45 ♔f3 ♔h7

On the conclusion of the game my opponent had to endure a mass of reproaches at the hands of his supporters: why didn't Black play 45...♔g6 here, and if 46 b7 ♔h5? But on this White had prepared 47 g4+! hxg3 48 fxg3, when 49 g4+ ♔h4 50 g5!, which enables the white rook to move from b8 with check, can merely be delayed by a series of checks, but not averted. It should be mentioned that Vasyukov saw all this, and promptly 'calmed' his companions.

46 b7 ♔g7
47 ♔e3

But here Black thought for a long time. Earlier he had not contemplated the fact that the white king could 'surround' the e5 pawn.

47 ... e4

Or 47...♔h7 48 ♔d3 ♔g7 49 ♔c3 ♖b1 50 ♔c4 ♖b2 51 ♔d5 ♖b5+ 52 ♔c6 ♖b2 53 ♖e8 (d8, a8), and the white pawn queens.

48 ♔f4 ♔h7
49 ♔e5 ♔g7
50 ♔d5 ♖b2

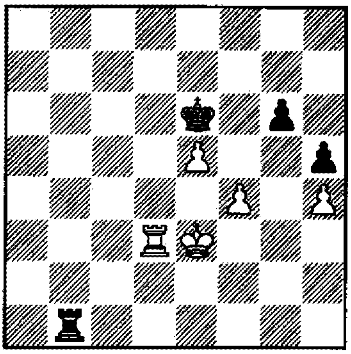
All the same Black cannot hold his e4 pawn. E.g. 50...♔h7 51 ♔c5 ♖b2 52 ♔c6! ♖c2+ 53 ♔d5 ♖b2 54 ♔xe4.

51 ♔xe4 ♖b4+
52 ♔d3 ♖b3+
53 ♔c4 ♖b1
54 f4

At last we have reached that theoretically won ending, for which White was aiming in his adjournment analysis.

54 ... ♖c1+
55 ♔d3 ♖b1
56 f5 ♖b6
57 f6+ **Black resigns**

Polugayevsky-Barlov
Haninge, 1988



In contrast to the typical ending of e5 and f4 pawns against a g6 pawn, here each side also has an h-pawn. This factor favours Black, who could now have continued 55...♖h1 56 ♖d6+ ♔f7 57 ♖d7+ ♔e6 58 ♖g7 ♖g1 followed by 59...♖g4, achieving a draw.

But the Yugoslav grandmaster preferred to stick to passive defence, in order to prevent the white rook from occupying the sixth rank.

55 ... ♖b6?!
56 ♔e4 ♖c6
57 ♖d4 ♖a6
58 ♖c4 ♖b6

Continuing the erroneous course, although it was not yet too late for 58...♖a1!

Black assumed that he would always have this possibility, and that first he had to divert the white king further away from the pawns.

59 ♖a4

By means of rook manoeuvres White strengthens his position: he occupies the a-file, the most favourable, conceding to the enemy rook the b- and c-files, from which it will be more difficult to give side checks.

59 ... ♖c6?
60 ♔d4 ♖b6
61 ♔c5 ♖b1

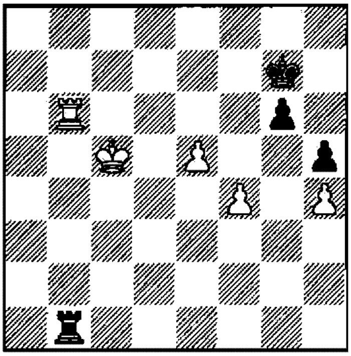
It seemed to me that Barlov did not sense the danger, when he sealed this, his 'secret' move. But at home a bitter disappointment awaited him, since it transpired that Black was too late in activating his rook.

How he must have regretted that earlier he had six unused attempts to follow the correct path! But now, alas, he had 'missed the boat'. And after the adjournment White took advantage of the chance offered to him.

62 ♖a6+ ♔f7
63 ♖f6+!

An important finesse, by which White succeeds in driving the black king onto the back rank.

63 ... ♔g7
64 ♖b6!



Black is forced to swallow the bitter pill: his downfall is caused by the tragic position of his rook on the b-file. His king does not have time to return to f7, and is obliged to step back.

64 ... ♖f1

64...♖c1+ is met by the decisive 56 ♔d6 ♔f7 66 ♖b7+ ♔f8 67 e6.

65 ♖b7+ ♔f8

65...♔h6 fails to 66 ♖f7, when the e-pawn has a clear road.

66 ♔d6! ♖a1

The f-pawn is immune: 66...♖xf4 67 ♖b8+ ♔g7 68 e6 ♖d4+ 69 ♔e5 ♖d1 70 e7 ♖e1+ 71 ♔d6 ♔f7 72 ♖f8+.

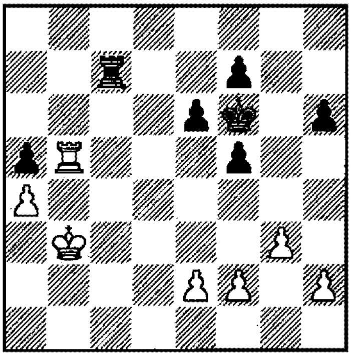
67 e6 ♖a6+
68 ♔e5!

Black resigned, in view of 68...♖a4 (68...♖a5+ 69 ♔f6 ♖f5+ 70 ♔xg6 ♖xf4 71 ♖f7+) 69 f5 ♖a5+ (69...gxf5 70 ♔f6) 70 ♔f6 ♖xf5+ 71 ♔xg6 ♖a5 72 ♔f6 ♖a8 73 ♖h7. This was the retribution for breaking one of the main rules of rook endings: the maximum activity for your own rook!

Polugayevsky-Ivkov

AVRO-2 Tournament, Hilversum 1973

White's advantage in the adjourned position is obvious. It comprises not only the greater activity of his rook, and the weakness of the a5 pawn – these by themselves might not be sufficient for a win – but also the fact that Black has doubled pawns on the f-file. It might seem that this is of no great significance, but in fact the pawn group f7/e6/f5 is close to ossification: any advance of these kingside pawns leads to the formation of new weaknesses.



It was easy to guess Black's sealed move: it is the only possibility.

41 ... ♖a7
42 f4

Thus the black pawns are fixed. At the same time (before taking his king over to the a5 pawn) White solves two further problems. Firstly, he removes from the 'refreshment stall' (this is what our chess predecessors called the 2nd rank in a rook ending) one of his pawns, and secondly, he prepares a place for his rook at e5, from where the e2 pawn will be securely defended.

42 ... ♔e7
43 ♔c4 ♔d7
44 ♔d4

It might be thought that White is 'showing off' by not playing the immediate 44 ♖b8 followed by the march of the king to b5. But in fact he wishes to force ...f7-f6 (in the event of 44...♔e7 White continues 45 ♔c5 ♖c7+ 46 ♔b6 ♖e2 47 ♖e5), so that on the 8th rank the white rook will gain additional scope for manoeuvring, and can operate more effectively. I will not venture to make a definite judgement as to whether after 44...f6 45 ♖b8 White's chances of winning would be greater than of drawing: I think, however, that Black is still quite a long way from a draw.

Even so, Black should have tried 44...f6, and after the game Ivkov regretted that he had not done so. The move made immediately leaves him on the verge of disaster.

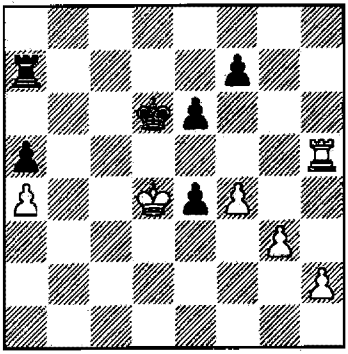
44 . . . h5
45 e4

It is here that the deformation of Black's pawn formation tells!

45 . . . fxe4
46 ♖xh5

White has gained a passed h-pawn, and in order to retain his passed e-pawn Black has to be prepared to sacrifice material – 46... ♖b7 47 ♖xa5 f5. This was probably his best chance.

46 . . . ♔d6



47 g4!

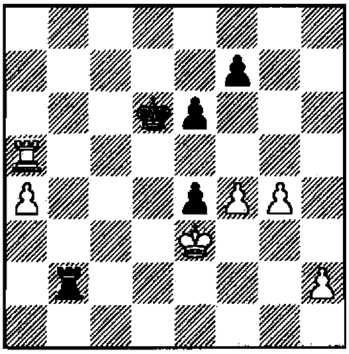
No 'pawn-grabbing'! After 47 ♔xe4 f5+ the black rook is freed from having to defend the a5 pawn, and switches to the 'assault line'. Evidently it was this that my opponent had missed in his preliminary calculations.

47 . . . ♖b7

Black is nevertheless forced to seek counterplay, in an inferior form.

48 ♖xa5 ♖b4+
49 ♔e3 ♖b2

A rather cunning idea. It only needs White to advance his pawn – 50 h4, for there to follow 50...♖b3+ 51 ♔xe4 ♖b4+ 52 ♔e3 ♖b3+, and after driving the white king by checks to the queenside, Black attacks the f-pawn from the rear, forces its advance, and thus wins one of the kingside pawns. This would ease his defence significantly.



50 g5!

White sees through Black's intention, and emphasises that play will revolve around the exploitation of the weakness at f7.

50 . . . ♖xh2
51 ♖a7 ♖a2

It turns out that Black cannot play 51...♖h7, in view of 52 a5 (but not 52 ♔xe4?? f5+) 52...♔c6 53 a6 ♔b6 54 ♖e7 ♔xa6 55 ♔xe4, and by advancing his king to f6 White wins easily, while he does not have to fear 55...f5+ since he can capture *en passant* – 56 gxf6. With the fall of the f7 pawn Black's game can no longer be saved.

52 ♔xe4 ♖a1
53 a5 ♖a4+
54 ♔f3 ♔d5
55 ♖d7+ ♔c6
56 ♖xf7 ♖xa4
57 g6 ♖a1
58 ♔g4 Black resigns

ALMOST A SPY STORY

On many occasions I have analysed adjourned games together with my old friend, chess master, and chess commentator for Soviet radio and television, Iakov Damsky. These analyses have been prolonged, with both of us fully engrossed in them. Imagine my astonishment when, during the 1969 USSR Championship, an elimination tournament for the Interzonal, Iakov approached me with the question:

'Would you object to some of your analyses being published?'

'Which analyses?'

'From this Championship, and from the International Tournament in Sochi...'

'Surely you don't remember them?!'

'I don't, but my tape recorder does.'

It turned out that, during our analysis, just as in a spy story, my friend had from time to time switched on by remote control his reporters' tape recorder.

Naturally, I did not object, and the account appeared in a special bulletin devoted to the 37th USSR Championship. And now it was my turn to ask the author for permission to include the material in this book. It was granted.

* * *

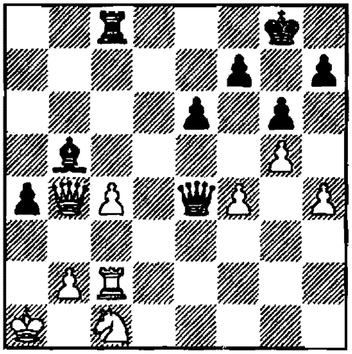
The analysis of an adjourned game. Only a chess beginner will be unfamiliar with the pressing, obsessive sensation of an impending adjournment session. It is fine if a win is in prospect. But if not? If one has to try to save a game, or attempt to realise a slight advantage? Then day and night, when eating, and sometimes during another game, the mind involuntarily returns to the position in question, and considers the hundredth or even thousandth variation with which one can continue the struggle.

This sensation is so oppressive, and at times so exhausting for players (incidentally, doctors reckon that a sleepless night cannot be compensated for, even by ten hours of sleep during the day), that it is not surprising that from time to time projects to eliminate adjourned games are suggested. It has been proposed, for instance, that the length of the first session be increased to seven hours, which would probably reduce by a factor of five the number of sealed moves.

Having witnessed the analysis of three games adjourned by grandmaster Lyev Polugayevsky, I would put my signature to such a suggestion, or any similar one. On the 'polishing' of only one of them, the Soviet Champion spent some seven hours, and so as to reproduce in full his monologue during this analysis, at least three issues of this bulletin would be required.

Gipslis-Polugayevsky

37th USSR Championship, Moscow 1969



'The sealed move is 43 ♖c3, that is clear. On 43...♗xc4 he replies 44 ♕d6, since the f4 pawn has definitely to be defended. It is the key to the position; if it can be exchanged, say, for the a-pawn, the ending is hopeless for White. The position should in general be won, but how? The white king is badly placed, the f4 pawn is weak; Black must combine his threats. But for the moment let's relieve the pin on the c-file: 44...♕d5. It would appear that White can't exchange: 45 ♕xd5 exd5, and both ...d5-d4 and ...♖e8 are threatened, in reply, say, to 46 ♘e2. White has to retreat with 45 ♕b4. And now, now... 45...♕d4! This both centralises, and attacks the f4 pawn. I'm happy about 46 ♕xa4, while if 46 ♘e2, then 46...♕e4, and White is in *zugzwang*. This means 46 ♕b7, when 46...♖d8 seems to be the only move. True, there is also 46...♖c5, but I don't want to weaken my back rank. 46...♖d8 must be better.

And White? He has 47 ♕c7 and 47 ♕e7. To the first of these both 47...♗f1 and 47...♗a6 are strong. Which is better? I don't know, let's look at that later. But as for the second continuation... It is bad to move the bishop; he plays 48 ♖c7 ♖f8 49 ♕f6, which can't be a win. Perhaps 47...a3? That's probably it. The bare king has to be exploited! With what does he take? With the queen is probably bad: 48...♕e4, so that leaves the rook. Let's calculate: 48 ♖xa3 ♖b8 49 ♖c3 ♕xf4, and it's all over. Ah ah, again 49 ♕f6! If 49...♕xf6 50 gxf6 h6, then ...♔h7, ...g6-g5 and so on (Polugayevsky rapidly calculates variations which don't appeal to him: White succeeds in activating his pieces, and gains drawing chances). It doesn't work! I must not exchange queens! Instead of 48...♖b8, let's try 48...♕d1. Or 48...♕d2 ? Let's check them in turn.

48...♕d1 49 ♖c3 ♖a8+ 50 ♔b1 ♗a2+. This means that the only move is 49 ♔b1 ♗d3+ 50 ♔a2, and Black has nothing.

48...♕d2. Again 49 ♔b1. I can't play 49...♗d5. 'Sac' the e-pawn: 49...e5, and then ...♗f5? Let's calculate. No it doesn't work. I felt intuitively that it wasn't so simple; I even said so at the adjournment. Thank God there is a scent, but is there a win? There must be! I so want to give up the a-pawn, but perhaps I shouldn't. Let's go back.

47 ♕e7. Should I move the rook? 47...♖a8? He returns to b4. 48...♖c8 49 ♕b7. Immediately 47...♖b8? No, I **must** play 47...a3!

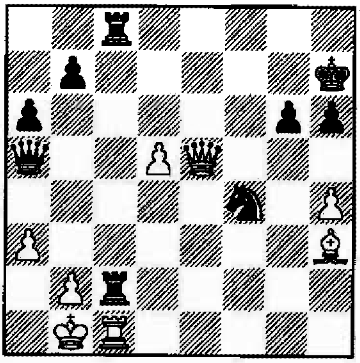
(And once again dozens of variations are checked, replies for White are found which, though forced, are sufficient. In passing, even a possible rook ending is considered, where Black keeps three passed pawns on the kingside, and gives up his rook for the far-advanced white b-pawn. But, alas, this is a possible and... not a forced, variation. And so the search continues. Continuations with the invasion of the black queen at d1 are played through again, and in the end are definitely rejected because of the constant threat of perpetual check by ♕d8-f6. At the same time the immediate moves ...h7-h6 and ...h7-h5 are studied, after which perpetual check is not to be feared, but White acquires other chances. Finally, the solution is found!)

No, 47...a3 doesn't work! 47...♖d5! – that's the secret! The threat is ...♖f5, attacking the f4 pawn, and defending f7; there is no perpetual check, also no invasion, while on 48 ♕b4 there is 48...♗a6! The c8 square is covered, and after the exchange of queens my rooks gets onto the fourth rank, and that is the end, while if 49 ♕b8+, then, if there is nothing better, 49...♖d8 50 ♕c7 a3, or 50...♖c8. Or 50...♗f1 is possible, also threatening ...♕d6. Then either the f4 pawn cannot be defended, or the queens must be exchanged, while c4 is inaccessible to the white rook. The rest I will look at tomorrow.'

But, as is known, to every chess game there are two players, and each tries to avoid falling in with the other's wishes. And on the resumption it turned out that a good 90% of all Polugayevsky's work remained 'unseen'.

The first few moves were guessed correctly: **43 ♖c3** (the sealed move) **43...♗xc4 44 ♕d6 ♕d5 45 ♕b4 ♕d4 46 ♕b7 ♖d8**, but here White played **47 ♕c7**. There followed **47...♗f1 48 ♔a2 ♕d6 49 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 50 ♔a3 ♖d4**, and after **51 ♖f3 ♗c4 52 ♘a2 ♗xa2 53 ♔xa2 h5 54 b3 ♖d2+ 55 ♔a3 axb3 56 ♔xb3 ♖h2** Black easily realised his two-pawn advantage. And for me this adjournment recalled the scholarly, but in principle very accurate, formula of Mayakovsky: 'For the sake of a single word, one uses up thousands of tons of literary ore...'

Another analysis by Polugayevsky proved to be even more interesting from the purely competitive point of view. On adjourning his game with **Igor Zaitsev** (Black) in the following position,



Polugayevsky criticised himself severely for having let slip an overwhelming positional advantage, easily found a path for realising it which had not occurred in the game, and then got down to settling the question: does White have only a perpetual check, or something more? A draw for Black was found fairly quickly, one that White was unable to avoid, but then 'in reserve' Polugayevsky found another, highly spectacular, continuation. This arose in the event of a serious, but at first sight imperceptible mistake by Black on the very first move after the adjournment.

41 ♕e7+

This move White sealed. 41... ♔h8, so as to avoid 42 ♗e6+, suggests itself, but it was here that Polugayevsky had prepared a 'mine': 42 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 43 ♕f6+ ♔h7 44 ♕f7+ ♔h8 45 ♕xf4!

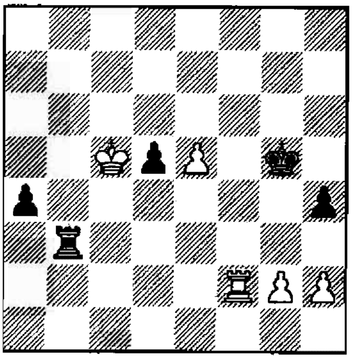
Mate is unexpectedly 'in the air': 46 ♕xh6+ and 47 ♗e6 mate. 45...♖e2 fails to save Black, in view of the forced continuation 46 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 47 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 48 ♕f5+ ♔e8 (48...♔e7 49 d6+) 49 ♕c8+, etc. There is similarly no perpetual check: 45...♖xb2+ 46 ♔xb2 ♕b6(b5)+ 47 ♔a1, and Black has at best one more check. There remains 45...♕d2, but... 46 ♕f6+ ♔h7 47 ♗e6!, and mate in two can be avoided only by attempting to give perpetual check, which is not there: 47...♖xb2+ 48 ♕xb2 ♕d3+ 49 ♕c2 ♕f1(b5)+ 50 ♔a2, or by returning the exchange: 47...♖c7 48 ♗g8+ ♔xg8 49 ♕d8+ ♔f7 50 ♕xc7+ ♔f6 51 ♕xb7, after which Black's chances of losing the game are quite considerable.

Black can avoid this unpleasantness only by playing **41...♔g8**, when it turns out that he has adequate counter-chances. This, incidentally, is what happened on the resumption: **42 ♗xe6+ ♘xe6 43 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 44 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 45 ♔xc2 ♕a4+**, and the undefended state of the h4 pawn, plus the proximity of the black king to White's passed pawn, gave Black equal chances.

'I should have given the check at e7 before the adjournment!' the Soviet Champion summed up. 'Then it would have been more difficult for Black to venture into 42...♔g8, and it would not have been easy for him to find the variation with the exchange sacrifice at the board.'

And it seemed to me that Lyev Polugayevsky regretted not so much the 'unobtained' half point, so much as the fine analysis that was not destined to see the light of day.

Polugayevsky's competitive character, and also his ability to penetrate to an unusual depth in his analysis, are displayed in his approach to his adjourned game with the Bulgarian grandmaster **Milko Bobotsov** from the 1966 Chigorin Memorial Tournament in Sochi.



Of course, Lyev realised that with exact play this ending is drawn: although at times we recall with irony Savielly Tartakower's aphorism 'All rook endings are drawn,' this very often proves to be the case. And besides, the best move – which Polugayevsky guessed – was sealed by Bobotsov.

41...d4

The tempting 41...a3 is refuted by 42 e6 ♖b2 43 e7 ♖xf2 44 e8=♕, and after 44...a2 White wins, although he has great technical difficulties to overcome.

42 e6 ♖e3 43 ♔d6 d3 44 e7 ♖e4 45 ♔d7 ♖d4+ 46 ♔c6 ♖e4 47 ♔d6 a3 48 ♔d7 ♖d4+ 49 ♔e6

With his last few moves White has set his opponent a cunning trap. 49...a2 now looks very tempting. True, after 50 ♖xa2 Black cannot play 50...♖e4+ 51 ♔f7 ♖f4+ 52 ♔g7 ♖e4 53 ♖a5+ ♔g4 54 ♖a4, when White wins. However, 50...d2 looks very strong, but then there follows 51 ♖a5+, when the black king has no safe square:

(a) 51...♔f4 52 ♖f5+ ♔g4 53 e8=♕ ♖e4+ 54 ♖e5 ♖xe5+ 55 ♔xe5 d1=♕ 56 ♕g6 mate.

(b) 51...♔h6 52 e8=♕ ♖e4+ 53 ♖e5 ♖xe5+ 54 ♔xe5 d1=♕ 55 ♕h8+ ♔g6 56 ♕f6+ ♔h5 57 ♕f3+.

Bobotsov, who in those days was the strongest player in Bulgaria, guessed White's intentions, and did not fall into the trap prepared. But it was clear that Polugayevsky was not, on the whole, very concerned about this. He had done all that he could, both as a competitor and a player: he had set before his opponent the maximum number of barriers. And his conscience was clear.

The game concluded as follows:

49...d2 50 ♖f5+ ♔h6!

The only move that leads to a draw.

51 ♖h5+ ♔g7 52 ♖g5+ ♔h6 53 ♖h5+ ♔g7 54 e8=♕ ♖e4+ 55 ♖e5 ♖xe5+ 56 ♔xe5 d1=♕, and White had nothing better than to force a draw by perpetual check.

A RUN FOR THE SAKE OF CHESS

I should like to give an account of one quite unique incident. Nominally my name did not feature in it, but I was directly involved, and essentially became one of its main actors.

1964, Amsterdam, the Interzonal Tournament for the World Championship... I was not a participant, but I arrived there in what was for me an unusual role: ex-World Champion Vasily Smyslov had invited me to be his second for this tournament, and I happily agreed.

By the rules of the event, the Soviet grandmasters – of whom there were five – were placed in an extremely difficult situation on account of the limit then in force: to reach the Candidates Matches a player had to finish in the first six, but for the Soviet 'quintet' only three places were allowed.

So it was not surprising that, in the battle for the leadership, a 'mad' race began over the marathon distance of 23 rounds.

Towards the finish Smyslov succeeded in bursting ahead. Before the last round he had to play off an adjourned game with the young Canadian master Z.Vranesic, where the ex-World Champion had a positional advantage. In the event of win a Smyslov had very real chances of contending for one of the first places, so that this point was especially valuable.

The endgame in the adjourned position did not seem complicated, but we did not relax, and thoroughly analysed all the possible continuations. The entire analysis was noted down by Smyslov on a sheet of paper.

On the morning of the day for adjournments, we were strolling contentedly along one of Amsterdam's central streets, in fine and sunny weather that was fully in keeping with our optimistic mood. It was then that we bumped into our good friend, the Belgian grandmaster O'Kelly de Galway, who was there as Vranesic's trainer. 'Alberic!' exclaimed Smyslov, 'why doesn't your young man resign?!' 'I myself don't know, Vasya,' replied O'Kelly with a modest smile, 'what can he be counting on?'

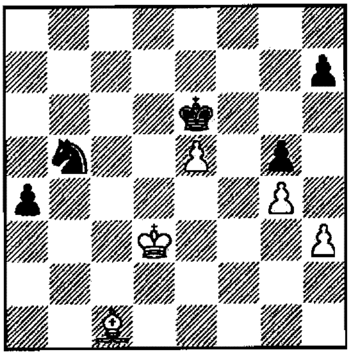
And here Smyslov did something that was hard to explain – evidently it was the tension of the fatiguing struggle that told: he took out of his jacket pocket the precious sheet with its dozens of secret moves, and stated imposingly: 'Here we have taken into account all White's saving attempts, and in every case he has to resign!' Who could have thought that this at first sight unwise gesture of the always correct ex-World Champion was in fact to prove a very strong 'chess move', and that it was destined to play a decisive role in the fate of the game.

At this point we reached the hotel where O'Kelly and Vranesic were staying. 'If you like, Vasya, I could take your sheet for a few minutes and show it to my young colleague; perhaps it will convince him.' Smyslov looked inquiringly at me, and after a moment's thought, firmly said; 'okay!'

The Belgian grandmaster went up to Vranesic's room, and soon returned with the words: "You know, he looked at your 'dossier' and replied that as yet he has no definite opinion, since he has only now sat down to analyse." Inwardly I felt indignant: 'How pigheaded!' but something in my heart went pit-a-pat.

On arriving at his hotel, Smyslov once again set out the board, and we – for probably the hundredth time! – checked the variations we had written down. Yes, there was no doubt, everything was correct, things were hopeless for White.

Vranesic-Smyslov
Amsterdam Interzonal, 1964



Black had sealed the strongest move:

51 ... a3!

Weaker was 51...h6 52 ♔c4 ♘c7 53 ♗a3 ♔xe5 54 ♗f8, and, by attacking the black pawns, White easily gains a draw.

Our analysis took the following course:

52 ♔c4

The best practical chance. After 52 ♔c2 Black's task is simplified: 52...h6! 53 ♔b3 ♔xe5 54 ♔c4 a2! 55 ♗b2+ ♔f4 56 ♔xb5 ♔g3 57 ♔c4 ♔xh3 58 ♔b3 ♔xg4, and it is easy to check that the white bishop cannot stop Black's passed pawns.

52 ... a2
53 ♗b2 ♘c7!

This manoeuvre is the crux of the winning plan. The knight heads for f4, and White is unable to defend his pawns.

54 ♔b3 ♘d5
55 ♔xa2 ♘f4
56 ♔b3 ♔d5!

Again the best decision. After the plausible 56...♘xh3 57 ♔c4 ♘f2 58 ♔d4 ♘xg4 59 ♔e4 the win for Black is highly problematic.

57 e6

White exploits his defensive resources to the full. If 57 ♔c2 ♘xh3 58 ♗d4 (otherwise 58...♘f2) 58...♘f4 and then 59... ♘g6!, when his pawns fall one by one.

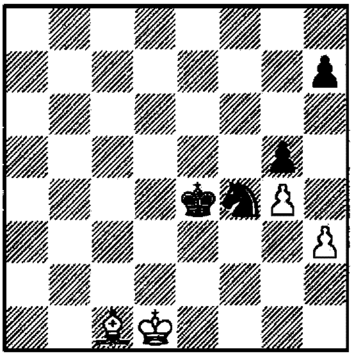
57 ... ♔xe6
58 ♗c1!

Fighting to his last breath. After 58 ♔c4 the winning method is familiar: 58...♘xh3 59 ♗d4 ♘f4 followed by ...♘g6-e5.

58 ... ♔e5!
59 ♔c2 ♔e4

It was not yet too late to go wrong: 59...♘xh3? 60 ♔d3.

60 ♔d1



And in this position Black continues 60...♔f3 followed by 61...♘xh3 with an easy win. This was the final summary of our joint analysis.

Late that evening I left the hotel where Smyslov was staying, and set off home. I was living a long way away, about an hour's walk, with one of the organisers Mr Withaus, who was preparing the tournament bulletin.

For a long time I couldn't go to sleep, and the thought kept nagging: 'Why didn't Vranesic resign; after all he saw our detailed analysis?'

Towards morning I somehow managed to cope with my nerves, and fell into a restless sleep (if in general one could call it sleep!).

But the adjourned position was evidently 'wedged' in my brain, which was continuing to work. It was already light when, like lightning, an unexpected idea 'struck' me: I jumped out of bed, grabbed my pocket set and... to my great horror I discovered that in our analysis there was a terrible 'hole' – we had overlooked an elementary drawing reply!

Glancing at my watch, I immediately realised that I would not have time to see Smyslov: within half an hour he would be on his way by bus to the adjournment session. An attempt to order a taxi would hardly help, for if it was even slightly late, everything would be lost.

There remained only one option: to run! After getting dressed literally in seconds, I dashed out on to the street. I had probably never run as quickly as on that memorable morning! During the marathon I feverishly sought a win in my mind, and, fortunately, found one. In literally a few minutes I managed to find a move that would finally dot the 'i'.

With my last breath I reached the hotel and saw that the bus with the participants was slowly setting off. 'Vasily Vasilyevich, get out!' I managed to shout. Understanding nothing, Smyslov looked out of the window. 'Get out!' I ordered. Realising that something extraordinary had happened, the ex-World Champion jumped off the moving bus. Without any superfluous words, on my pocket set I instantly showed the position from the last diagram, and continued 60... ♔f3? 61 h4!! gxh4 62 ♗xf4, and Smyslov immediately went as White as a sheet, realising the position was a 'dead' draw, and that there was no time for new searching! And then I proudly and reassuringly stated: 'All the same, Vranesic is lost,' and I immediately demonstrated the winning course...

By taxi we quickly reached the tournament hall. Vranesic was already awaiting his opponent. After sitting down at the board, for a moment the ex-World Champion stiffened, evidently bringing himself together. Then a series of moves followed in rapid tempo, and after 60 ♔d1 the familiar position from the diagram was reached. Vranesic expectantly awaited his opponent's move. Smyslov slowly raised his hand and stretched it out... towards his king, but halfway... it moved to the side in the direction of the pawn. There followed:

60 ... ♘xh3!

The opponent's face flinched, and... Vranesic, smiling, stopped the clocks: after 61 ♔e2 Black has the decisive 61...♘f4+, when the white king has no good square.

The reader will surely agree with me that, for the sake of such moments, it is worth spending one's life in chess!

4. *On the Eve*

AND SO, theory and analysis. The study of opening problems and of adjourned positions. Does this totally exhaust the work of the grandmaster, the work of the chess player outside the tournament hall? The answer is no. There is yet another field, without success in which it is impossible to hope for much. This is preparation for a completely specific game, in a completely specific situation, with a completely specific opponent. Here everything is important: to guess the opening, to find the scheme which is the most unpleasant for the opponent, and to choose the correct battle tactics. But perhaps the most difficult thing is to bring oneself into that one correct frame of mind, which will harmonise fully one hundred per cent with the situation in which the game is being played. And this takes on special significance, incommensurable with anything else, on the eve of a decisive encounter.

I should like to describe several such instances.

A STIMULUS IS PROVIDED BY... THE CONTROLLERS

The 1967 USSR Championship was run on the Swiss System, which I personally consider totally unsuitable for such an important event. And I must admit that, in the future, I should very much like to avoid playing even once more in a 'Swiss'.

At the Championship in Kharkov there was no round in which one of the competitors did not have fairly serious grounds for feeling aggrieved. But that which happened to me exceeded, in my opinion, all 'Swiss' records for injustice.

The battle for first place was basically between Mikhail Tal and myself. And before the last round, the pairings were announced: Tal was to play the master V. Zhuravlyov, and I – grandmaster Ratmir Kholmov. To my question as to how such an 'inequality' could arise, the controllers replied with something not altogether intelligible regarding the rules of the Swiss System: a player should have not more than one 'upfloat', and if I had played against a different opponent, Kholmov's opponent (in a game where the gold medal was not at stake!) would have had an 'upfloat'...

I pointed out what strong opponents I had had during the Championship, and objected to such an artificial and essentially formal decision by the controllers, but this did not help, and I must confess that I literally lost my temper. After all, it was obvious (Misha would not have been offended by my saying this) that to win a deciding game against the inexperienced Zhuravlyov, and against Kholmov, who at that time was practically invincible, was not the same thing.

I made a protest to the control committee, and said that even if such a rule in the Swiss System did in fact exist, to apply it in the last round, and in such a situation, when the question of the national title was at stake, was to ignore common sense...

Later, one of my acquaintances said that it was my 'attack' on the controllers at that point which could be considered my first step in the battle for the Championship of (no more and no less!) the World. I readily admit that this is an exaggeration. But the source of my win over Kholmov did indeed lie in that rather angry exchange of words with the chief controller.

Earlier I had frequently been reproached for my lack of purely competitive, 'Fischer-like' aggressiveness at the time of a decisive battle. I will not venture to argue with this, since in my younger days I had normally been not altogether successful in my handling of decisive games. Of course, there are leading traits in a person's character, and if he is of a genial nature he will only be put out by aggression at the time of battle. But even now, before a game I would not object to a sensible dose of aggression, one which does not cloud the brain, does not overwhelm one, and does not confuse one's thinking, but leads to a state of enthusiasm. Moreover, for many years I have been trying to find methods of bringing myself into such a state, but unfortunately I do not always find it possible.

But in my game with Kholmov this was helped by the injustices of the Swiss System. I sat down at the board in such an energetically aggressive frame of mind, I was so undisguisedly eager for victory – and 'to avenge the insult', that my opponent apparently sensed this. And, perhaps, quaked in his shoes. This happened frequently to the opponents of the young Tal, Fischer and Karpov, i.e. when they had to play against genuinely strong characters.

As for special and deep opening preparation for this game, it was practically non-existent. Under the Swiss System one normally learns the name of one's opponent only when there is essentially no time left for opening exploration. And before the encounter with Kholmov, I restricted myself to just one decision, but one of crucial importance: to avoid half-hearted measures. After all, I could have opened 1 ♘f3 or even 1 g3, thus retaining a certain degree of flexibility, but I decided to join battle in one of the main variations of any of the openings. The English Opening, or the main variations of the Slav Defence, Queen's Gambit Accepted, or Nimzo-Indian Defence... In short, I was prepared to play uncompromisingly, not fearing any possible prepared variation, and was pinning my hopes on the five hours that the game would last.

To this day I am unable to explain why, in this game, Kholmov chose the King's Indian Defence, an opening in which I had normally been successful as White. It cannot be ruled out that, in planning his battle tactics and knowing my anxiety, he himself was thinking in terms of winning, and hence chose such a sharp and complicated opening. Since here the battle is particularly uncompromising, and draws in the King's Indian are much more rare than in, say, many lines of the Queen's Gambit.

Be that as it may, but Kholmov's decision could not have corresponded better to my frame of mind. And this is what happened.

Polugayevsky-Kholmov
35th USSR Championship, Kharkov 1967
English Opening

1 c4 c5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 ♘c3 g6
4 e3

Perhaps the most unpleasant move for Black. In the event of 4 d4 or 4 g3 he has a comfortable game.

4 ... ♗g7
5 d4 ♘f6?

A serious opening mistake. Normal is 5... d6, and if 6 d5 ♘e5, as occurred, incidentally, in one of Fischer's games.

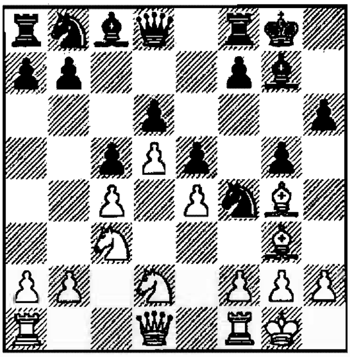
But in the present game a set-up from the King's Indian is reached, only with one important difference: White has unexpectedly gained a tempo. To give such odds at the very start of the game shows excessive generosity, to say the least, especially since, as it is, chess is sometimes called 'the tragedy of one tempo'.

6 d5 ♘b8
7 ♗e2 d6

8 0-0 0-0
9 e4 e6
10 ♗f4 e5

Forced, since 10...exd5 11 cxd5 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 is less good.

11 ♗g5 h6
12 ♗h4 g5
13 ♗g3 ♘h5
14 ♘d2 ♘f4
15 ♗g4



It is here that Black's opening 'losses' make themselves felt: in comparison with the normal variation White has succeeded in castling, and he now carries out without hindrance the strategically advantageous exchange of light-square bishops.

15 ... ♘d7
16 a3

Frequently one has to argue about the correctness of a particular plan. In the game White preferred to begin an immediate storming of the queenside. But even so, 16 ♖e1 appears more logical, preparing the march of the white knight to f5, which would be highly unpleasant for Black.

16 ... ♘f6
17 ♗xc8 ♕xc8
18 b4 h5
19 f3

19 ♘b5 appeared tempting, but this would have been a false trail. After 19... ♘e8 20 ♗xf4 exf4 21 ♕xh5 Black replies simply 21...a6, and nothing definite for White is apparent.

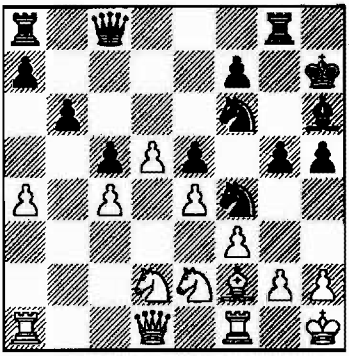
19 ... ♔h7
20 ♗f2 b6
21 bxc5

White is quite correct to clarify the situation. Now in the event of 21...bxc5 he gains the chance to operate on the b-file. Nevertheless, this is what Black should have played, since the passed d-pawn and the intrusive advance a3-a4-a5 prove to be weightier factors than the d6 square for the black knight.

21 ... dxc5
22 a4 ♖g8
23 ♔h1 ♗h6

Black pins his hopes on a kingside attack, and aims for the ...g5-g4 break. But White proves to be prepared for events on the right-hand flank, and by prophylaxis he immediately neutralises Black's attempts.

24 ♘e2



Hanging over Black is the threat of the knight transfer to f5.

The advance 24...h4 leads to the loss of a pawn: 25 ♘xf4 gxf4 (25...exf4 26 e5) 26 ♗xh4, while on 24...g4 I was planning to continue 25 ♘xf4 (25 ♘g3 is now dangerous, in view of 25...h4 26 ♘f5 g3! 27 hxg3 hxg3 28 ♗xg3 ♖xg3! 29 ♘xg3 ♕g8) 25...♗xf4 26 ♗h4!, when the following variations are possible:

(a) 26...gxf3 27 ♕xf3 ♘g4 28 ♖a2, and there is no good defence against 29 g3;

(b) 26...♘e8 27 g3 ♗xd2 28 ♕xd2 gxf3 (28...♘d6 29 f4! ♕e8 30 ♗f6 exf4 31 e5) 29 ♖xf3 ♘d6 30 ♖af1 ♕g4 31 ♗e7, with a big advantage.

24 ... ♘xe2

This is equivalent to an admission of the failure of his plans. He should have played 24...♘e8 immediately. Black evidently thought that in this case after 25 ♘xf4 gxf4 his bishop would be 'forgotten', and that White, by continuing 26 a5, would develop a dangerous initiative, while his g2 square would be easily defended.

But nevertheless I think that the open g-file would to a certain extent have restricted White's possibilities. Now, however, he becomes sole master of the board.

25 ♕xe2 ♘e8
26 a5 ♘d6
27 ♖a3 ♖g6
28 ♗e3 g4?

Not wishing to defend passively (28...♖b8), Black tries to complicate matters, but this 'activity' leads merely to a sharp deterioration in his position, and White himself gains a decisive attack.

29 ♗xh6 ♔xh6
30 f4 f6

Or 30...exf4 31 e5 ♘f5 32 ♖xf4.

31 fxe5 fxe5
32 ♕e3+ ♔g7
33 ♕g3 ♘f7
34 ♕h4 ♕b7
35 ♕xh5

The nervous tension of the last round tells: White forces matters too soon. Much more convincing was 35 ♖f2, followed by 36 ♘f1 or 36 ♖a1 and 37 ♖af1, with a decisive advantage. 36 axb6 axb6 37 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 38 ♕xh5 was also good.

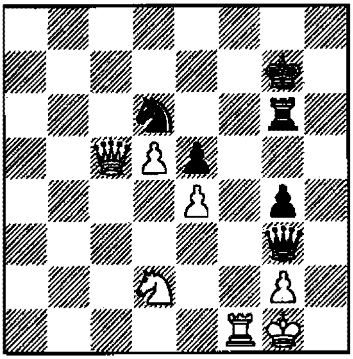
35 ... ♖h8
36 ♕f5 ♕e7
37 axb6 axb6
38 ♔g1

Although Black has activated his pieces somewhat, nevertheless White's extra pawn must sooner or later have the decisive word. Since 38...♘d6 39 ♕f2 ♕g5 40 ♖a7+ brings no relief, Black tries with his next move to confuse his opponent.

38 ... b5
39 cxb5 ♘d6
40 ♕f2 ♘xb5
41 ♖g3 ♘d6

Otherwise 42 ♘c4. Black went in for this position assuming that the c5 pawn was invulnerable, but White had calculated one move further.

42 ♕xc5 ♖xh2
43 ♔xh2 ♕h4+
44 ♔g1 ♕xg3



45 ♘c4!

The refutation of Black's combination. Neither 45...♘xc4 46 ♕f8+, nor 45...♖h6 46 ♕c7+ is possible. Black's reply is forced.

45 ... ♕c3
46 ♕a7+ ♔h6
47 ♘xd6 ♖xd6
48 ♕b8! ♖a6
49 ♕f8+ ♔g6
50 ♕g8+ ♔h6
51 ♕xg4

In this position the game was adjourned, but Black decided not to continue.

OVERCOMING ONESELF

Polugayevsky-Osnos

36th USSR Championship, Alma Ata 1969
Sicilian Defence

I know from my own experience that sometimes one follows all the rules in preparing for a tournament, but one's play, as they say, won't 'get going'. Whether it is psychology or something else that is the cause of this, I do not know. But I have seen very many players in this state, and each has tried to escape from it in his own way.

It was this that happened to me in the 1969 USSR Championship at Alma Ata. Game after game I played somehow very leisurely, my thinking was sluggish, and uninteresting even to me myself. The result appeared natural enough: in the first half of the tournament – one draw after another, a fifty per cent score, and a place far away from the leading group. It was absolutely essential to master myself. 'Better to lose than to play such depressing draws,' I decided, and before the next round, the 10th, in which I was to meet Vyacheslav Osnos, I decided on a course of play that was completely unusual for me. And for this purpose I played 1 e4 – a move that I practically never employ.

It was obvious that by this the opponent was afforded a major trump in the opening stage of the game, since there was no time to study for White the subtleties of the possible Sicilian, Ruy Lopez, or Pirc Defence. But I did not even set myself such a task. Just the opposite: in order to enliven my play and force my brain to work, I intended to solve all resulting problems at the board.

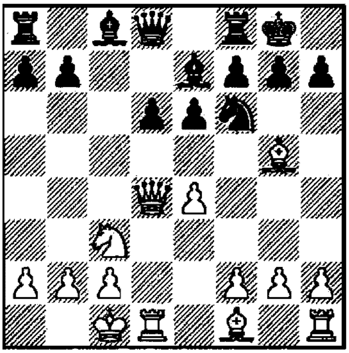
And that is what happened. Osnos employed a system that I had never analysed (after all, I don't play 1 e4!). This could have unsettled me, had I not planned such a situation beforehand. As a result, at the board I managed to find a plan for obtaining an advantage, and, more important, convert it into a win.

It is for this reason that I consider this game to be a decisive one. It indeed changed the course of the tournament for me. My play became more lively, and point after point appeared for me in the tournament table. And in the end – a share of first place, a match with Alexander Zaitsev, about which more later, and the title of USSR Champion.

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 d6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 ♘c6
6 ♗g5 e6
7 ♕d2 ♗e7
8 0-0-0 ♘xd4

This early exchange of knights in the Rauzer Variation enjoys a dubious reputation, and not without reason. Evidently my opponent nevertheless ventured upon it, because he did not wish after 8...0-0 to allow White to play 9 ♘b3, which markedly reduces Black's chances of an attack on the white king.

9 ♕xd4 0-0



10 ♗c4

The most rapid wins for White have occurred when he has played 10 e5!, for example 10...dxe5 11 ♕xe5 ♗d7 12 h4! ♖c8 13 ♖h3 ♖c5 14 ♕e3 ♕c8 15 ♖g3! ♔h8 (or 15...♖d8 16 h5 ♗e8 17 ♗d3 g6 18 ♘e4 ♖xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♗b5 20 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 21 ♗xf6 ♗xd3 22 ♖gxd3 ♖xc2+ 23 ♔b1, and in the game Zavernyaev-Kalinin, USSR 1960, Black resigned) 16 ♔b1 ♕c6 17 h5 ♖g8 18 h6 gxh6 19 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 20 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 21 ♘e4 ♖f5 22 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 23 ♕d3, and White won quickly (Zhilin-Furman, USSR 1958).

Why then, if I knew these games, did I not play 10 e5 ? In the first instance because most probably Osnos also knew them. What's more, not only knew them, but since the variation was part of his arsenal, he may have had some subtleties prepared. To refute these at the board would probably have required considerable effort, and I was not wanting to force matters. The more so, since after 10...dxe5 11 ♕xe5 ♗d7 12 h4 ♖c8 13 ♖h3 Black has the quiet reply 13...♕c7. Now after 14 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 15 ♘b5 ♗xb5 16 ♗xb5 ♖fc8 it is not at all easy to utilise the advantage of the two bishops, while 14 ♕e3 ♗c6 15 ♖g3 ♖fd8 does not cause Black any particular difficulties.

10 ... ♕a5
11 f4 ♗d7

The position after 11...h6 12 ♗h4 e5 is well known to theory. Black's move in the game was the 'latest word' at that time. Leaving the white bishop at g5, Black parries the possible 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 by 13...♗c6, when his light-square bishop occupies an excellent post.

12 ♗b3!?

This was found at the board. I did not care for either 12 ♔b1 ♗c6 13 ♖hf1 ♖ad8 14 ♗b3 h6 15 ♗h4 ♕h5!, when the queen becomes an active defender of her king, or 12 ♖hf1 b5! 13 ♗b3 b4, when Black seizes the initiative. The game Keres-Geller (Curacao Candidates 1962) went 12 ♖he1 ♖fd8 13 ♗b3, and instead of the erroneous 13...b5?! as played, Black, by the same manoeuvre 13...h6! 14 ♗h4 ♕h5!, could have obtained a perfectly satisfactory game.

Later, theory pronounced the strongest in this position to be 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♗c6 14 ♗d2! ♘d7 15 ♘d5 ♕d8 16 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 ♖he1 ♖fc8 18 ♕f4, as occurred in the games Tseshkovsky-Korensky, USSR 1973, and Karpov-Ungureanu at the 1972 Olympiad in Skopje. But after all, theorists bring in their verdicts (which, incidentally, are not always final) only on the basis of our general experience and practice...

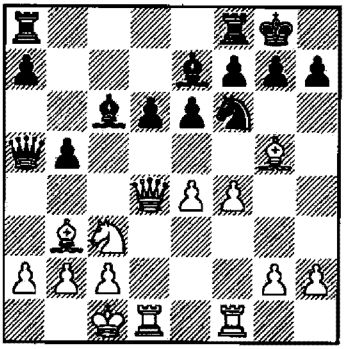
12 ... ♗c6

It is clear that 12...b5 is refuted by 13 e5!, but the move played also deserves censure. The bishop moves away from the defence of e6, which may be attacked by the white f-pawn. Therefore 12...♖fd8 13 ♖hf1 ♖ac8 14 f5 ♕c5 is more logical, although here too White retains a promising position.

13 ♖hf1

White consistently carries through his plan of playing f4-f5, provoking ...e6-e5, and seizing the d5 square. Possibly here too Black should have resorted to the manoeuvre 13...h6 14 ♗h4 ♕h5, but my opponent very quickly made what seemed to be a highly energetic move.

13 ... b5



I sensed that it was on the solution to this particular problem that if not everything, then a great deal, depended. I thought for almost an hour, and found a refutation...

14 ♗xf6! ♗xf6

No better is 14...gxf6 15 f5! b4 16 ♘e2, when Black cannot maintain his pawn at e6.

15 ♕xd6 ♗xc3

If Black had attempted to repair the basic defect of his position, and had defended his light-square bishop by 15...♖ac8, then White had prepared 16 e5! ♖fd8 17 ♕c5!, and if 17...♗xg2, then 18 ♕g1!! ♗xf1 19 exf6, which concludes the game instantly.

If 15...♕b6 16 f5, and now after 16...♖fd8 the queen retreats to g3, while on 16...♗xc3 the piece sacrifice 17 fxe6! is decisive, e.g. 17...♗f6 18 exf7+ ♔h8 19 ♖xf6! ♖ad8 20 ♕xd8, winning.

It was on these and numerous other similar variations that I spent an hour in thought on my 14th move.

16 ♕xc6 ♖ac8
17 ♕d7 ♖fd8?

This move has to be condemned. As is soon apparent, this rook should have stayed where it was to defend f7. The lesser evil was 17...♖cd8 18 ♕b7!, with advantage to White after 18...♖b8 19 ♕e7, or 18...♗d2+ 19 ♔b1 ♗xf4 20 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 (or 20...♖xd8 21 g3 ♕c7 22 ♕xb5 ♗e5, and White is a pawn up) 21 ♕xb5. And although White should probably be able gradually to realise his advantage, Osnos should have reconciled himself to this continuation. But he failed to foresee that which occurred in the game...

18 ♕e7 ♗d2+
19 ♔b1 ♗xf4
20 ♖xd8 ♖xd8

There is little pleasure in playing on a pawn down after 20...♕xd8 21 ♕xa7, since 21...♗xh2 fails due to the weakness of f7.

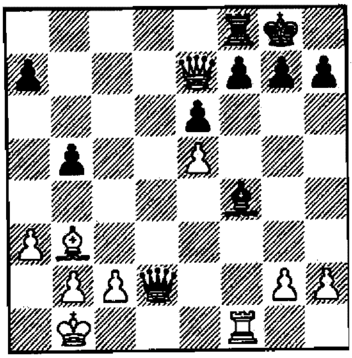
21 e5!

It was this move that escaped Black's attention. The immediate 21 g3 is parried by 21...♕c7, but now his forces are disunited, and he loses due to the weakness of f7 and the back rank.

21 ... ♕d2

On 21...♖f8 White can play 22 a3, or 22 ♗xe6 fxe6 23 g3, or 22 c3 ♗xe5 23 ♖xf7, winning quickly.

22 a3 ♖f8



23 ♗xe6!

Also possible was the more spectacular 23 g3 ♗g5 (mate follows after 23...♗xe5 24 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 25 ♕e8+) 24 ♕xe6! fxe6 25 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 26 ♖xf7 ♕d8 (if 26...♕e1+ 27 ♔a2 ♕xe5, then 28 ♖f6+!) 27 ♖d7+ ♔f8 28 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8. But firstly, I did not want to play an ending (even though it was won) with opposite-colour bishops, and secondly, I am not an advocate of brilliance for brilliance's sake, if there exists a more rational possibility.

23 ... g5
24 g3 fxe6

White also has a pretty win after 24...♕e2 25 ♖xf4 gxf4 26 ♕g5+ ♔h8 27 ♕h6! ♖g8 (if 27...♔g8, then 28 ♗f5) 28 ♕f6+ ♖g7 29 ♗xf7, when Black cannot halt the advance of the e-pawn, e.g. 29...♕d1+ 30 ♔a2 ♕d7 (or 30...♕d4 31 ♗b3!) 31 e6 ♕d5+ 32 b3 ♕d6 33 c7!, and wins.

25 ♕xe6+ ♔g7
26 gxf4 ♕g2

Black merely prolongs the resistance by 26...♖xf4 27 ♖xf4 ♕xf4 28 ♕d7+ ♔g6 29 ♕xb5 ♕xh2 30 ♕c6+ ♔h5 31 ♕e4.

27 ♖d1 gxf4
28 ♕d7+ ♖f7

Nothing is changed by 28...♔g8 29 e6 ♕g6 30 e7 ♖e8 31 ♕xe8+ ♕xe8 32 ♖d8 ♔f7 33 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 34 ♔c1, when White has a won pawn ending.

29 e6 Black resigns

NON-INDIFFERENT INDIFFERENCE

The match with grandmaster Alexander Zaitsev for the title of USSR Champion proved to be one of the most important events in my chess career. Not because it was my first match, and not because in it I gained my second successive gold medal (before our meeting I was the favourite). But because for almost the first time I succeeded in preparing very exactly, and more important – in confidently overcoming a psychological barrier which arose during the course of the match. And at testing moments during events in subsequent years, I would systematically return in my thoughts to the match. This would subconsciously enable me to accomplish that same psychological preparatory work as then, in 1969, in the hospitable and ancient Russian town of Vladimir.

Here it would seem appropriate to reveal the method to which I resorted in working on the purely chess aspect of the forthcoming match.

As I later discovered, my opponent, with two weeks available for preparation, spent them on the analysis of my games. Zaitsev began with the tournaments in which I had played in 1959, and carefully looked through some 250 'full-length' games. For anything else he simply had no time.

Together with international master Vladimir Bagirov, who was my second, I also worked intensively. But along different lines. Since time was short, we decided not to analyse games that were ten, or even five years old, being motivated by the fact that Zaitsev's style had taken shape only later. We were convinced that the Alexander '1965 model' could give us a false impression of the present-day Zaitsev, and we began studying his games from the time of his qualitative leap – from the Chigorin Memorial Tournament at Sochi in 1967, where Zaitsev became one of the winners of the tournament, and also a grandmaster.

As a result, Alexander's 'growing pains' remained out of the picture, and we became acquainted with the 'ultra-modern' Zaitsev. And we saw that he was a player with excellent combinational vision, ingenious in defence, and an optimist even at the most difficult moments. His opening schemes were well worked out, and there was no point in counting on his time-trouble – such a thing was foreign to Zaitsev.

At the same time we managed to discover his weak points, in particular, mistakes in strategically complicated positions, and a certain haste in the taking of important decisions.

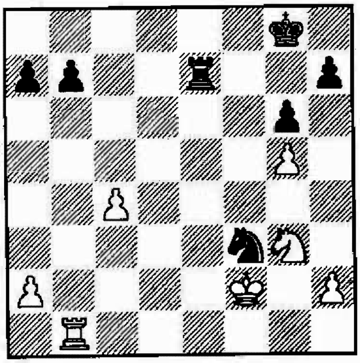
A little later I will also mention another vulnerable aspect of Alexander's play, on which my strategy in the deciding game was based.

But for the moment – on the course of the match. At the start I wanted to win a game as quickly as possible, so as to then conduct the struggle 'from a position of strength'. And so, after a draw in the first game, where my opponent exchanged in the centre and immediately avoided fighting for an advantage, in the second encounter I opened 1 e4. According to Rauzer, 'in this way White begins and wins', but I had hardly ever played it before. And, jumping ahead, I should say that it was this game that convinced me that, in matches, one cannot pin one's hopes only on the unexpected, switch from side to side, and abandon one's normal style of play. Of course, it is not a bad idea to keep in one's repertoire openings 'for one game', but this should not be an end in itself. On the whole, such tactics do not pay off, although, as experience from matches shows, at certain times they are justified.

And so, with no experience of playing White after 1 e4, I failed to gain an advantage, then made a number of inaccurate moves, and lost. Having said all this, I in no way wish to belittle Zaitsev's excellent creative achievement in this game.

I went along to the third game not with the intention of getting even, but simply of playing. I could not allow myself the luxury of a second defeat, and therefore the idea of playing very riskily was not even considered, either in my chess preparations, or psychologically.

The course of the game – and please excuse this ancient comparison – resembled the fluctuations of two scale pans. By the 15th move I had already managed to seize the initiative as Black, then on the 27th move I 'handed' it back to Zaitsev. My opponent was not long in returning the compliment, and by the 33rd move the initiative was once again with me. The game was adjourned with an advantage to Black, but it was still a far cry from a win. Many hours of analysis revealed that if there was a win, it could be achieved only with colossal difficulty. Here are some possible variations:



Black, of course, sealed

42 . . . ♘xg5

Now White has two main continuations: 43 c5 and 43 a4. The idea of the first of these is to drive away the black knight by h3-h4, then to establish the white knight on e4 and move the king to the centre. E.g. 43 c5 ♔g7 44 h4 ♘e6 45 ♘e4 ♖c7 (45...♔h6 46 ♖d1 followed by ♖d5) 46 ♘d6, with a counter-attack against the b7 pawn. The idea behind the second continuation, 43 a4, is the threat of a4-a5-a6, after which the c-pawn, from being a weakness, may become a strength.

In searching for an antidote to this strong plan, we hit upon the 'antipositional' move ...h7-h5. It is not possible here to support its strength with variations, but on a more careful examination of the position the strategical advantages of this move can be understood. The pawn is moved off the 7th rank, the king is assured of a comfortable post at h6, and at the same time the possibility of creating a passed h-pawn is retained. Of course, this move does not ensure a clear win, but nevertheless it presents White with the most difficult problems.

Everything, however, turned out differently. The very first move made by Zaitsev on the resumption did not aspire to anything, and was clearly not the strongest. Black gained the opportunity to regroup his forces.

After

43 ♖b3 h5!
44 h4 ♘e6
45 ♖a3 b6

he obtained a won position. The game continued:

46 ♔e3 ♘c5+
47 ♔d4 ♖d7+
48 ♔e5 ♔f7

An inaccuracy, although granted, it does not yet relinquish the win. The king is needed there where Black has a pawn majority, i.e. on the kingside. After 48...♔g7 49 ♘f1 ♔h6 50 ♘e3 ♖e7+ 51 ♔d5 ♖e4 it is all over.

49 ♖f3+ ♔e7

Here too it was better to move the king to g7.

50 ♘e2 ♘d3+
51 ♔e4 ♘c5+
52 ♔e5 ♖d2!

This is now the only way to win.

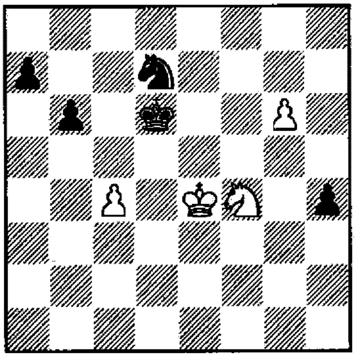
53 ♘f4 ♘d7+
54 ♔e4 ♖xa2
55 ♘xg6+ ♔d6
56 ♖f5 ♖g2!

Preventing 57 ♘f4, since after 57...♖g4 the rooks and the h-pawns are exchanged, and the knight ending is easily won for Black.

57 ♖d5+

Zaitsev finds a last chance, and tries it.

57 ... ♔c7
58 ♖g5 ♖xg5
59 hxg5 ♔d6
60 ♘f4 h4
61 g6



61 ... ♔e7??

With one move Black destroys the fruits of his many hours of work. I can put this mistake down only to extreme fatigue. Black could have won easily by 61...♘f6+ 62 ♔f5 ♘e8 63 ♔g4 ♔c5 (but not 63...a5 64 ♘d3 a4 65 c5+ bxc5 66 ♘b2!).

62 ♔f5 a5
63 ♔g5

I simply did not see this move, but assumed that White was bound to play 63 ♔g4, which after 63...♘e5+ 64 ♔xh4 ♘xg6+ 65 ♘xg6 ♔d6 leads to his defeat. But now Black has no more than a draw.

63 ... ♘e5
64 ♘d5+ ♔f8
65 ♔xh4 ♘xc4
66 ♔g5

Drawn

I have given the resumption of this game here, not because the ending proved to be particularly interesting, but so as to emphasise that it was not only on account of the minus score that for me the most difficult moment of the match had arrived. Before the start of the fourth game (the match was due to consist of only six games) there remained less than 24 hours...

What was required now was some important, long-term preparatory work of a purely psychological nature.

I recognised, as I had never done before, my mistake in previous years. Both in junior events, and then in USSR Championships, I had always regarded each decisive game as the game of my life! And when I failed to achieve my aim, I reproached myself for my lack of mobilisation, and the weak concentration of my efforts. But in fact the root of the evil lay elsewhere: I was let down by excessive constraint – the very worst enemy of creativity!

And before the fourth game of my match with Zaitsev, I suddenly sensed very clearly: despite the importance of the coming encounter, I had to achieve an inwardly light-hearted, even – if you will excuse the expression – devil-may-care attitude to the game. In the psychological sense I had to reduce the coming encounter to the most ordinary of games, of which I had already played more than a hundred or two, and in the majority of cases – successfully. It was another matter that I had to play thoughtfully, without weakening my combative edge, to play with all possible competitive aggression, but on no account to associate each important step in the game with the sheen of the gold medal.

Such self-preparation, which one might call the autogenous training of a chess player, I did in fact succeed in carrying out. How was it done? I would not venture to give any sort of universal advice. One player, so as to obtain a composed frame of mind, has to have a good sleep, another must take a walk through beautiful avenues, parks and roads, a third has to grow well and truly angry, if for him this is pleasing, a fourth, in contrast, has to calm himself, while a fifth has to go along to the game wearing his favourite shirt or tie. I believe that some time in the future psychologists in general, and chess psychologists in particular, will translate these recommendations, which we reach by the method of trial and error, into the exact language of science.

Be that as it may, but by purely individual means I succeeded in attaining that so desirable 'indifference', which was far from indifferent for me. In accordance with the frame of mind attained, within literally a few short minutes the opening was also planned. There would be no sharp tactics, no playing according to the principle 'win or bust'. The Catalan Opening, that's what it would be, even though it did not promise White any marked advantage! In addition, it combated excellently one further deficiency in my opponent's play. Although, I repeat, Alexander was highly resourceful in defending against a direct attack, he defended much less confidently and with much less interest in slightly inferior positions, and would occasionally allow himself impulsive decisions, which strategically were not altogether well-founded. It was in such a situation that I could hope to increase appreciably even a minimal advantage.

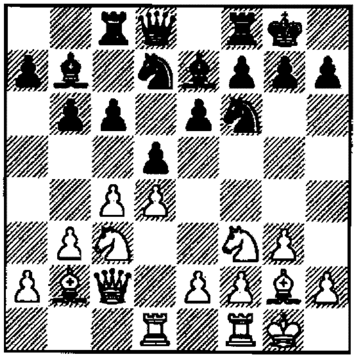
The course of the game fully confirmed the correctness both of my 'chosen' mood, and of the corresponding, purely chess plan for the game.

Polugayevsky-Zaitsev
USSR Ch. Play-off (4), Vladimir 1969
Catalan Opening

1	c4	**e6**
2	g3	**d5**
3	♗g2	**♘f6**
4	♘f3	**♗e7**
5	0-0	**0-0**
6	d4	**c6**
7	♕c2	**♘bd7**
8	b3	**b6**
9	♗b2	

After 9 ♘c3 Black can even consider 9...♗a6.

9	...	**♗b7**
10	♘c3	**♖c8**
11	♖ad1	



A very familiar position. The well-tried continuation here is 11...♕c7, as played, for instance, by Nei against Geller in the 34th USSR Championship at Tbilisi, 1967. Reshevsky once tried 11...c5, but this gave White the advantage.

11	...	**b5**

Black is resorting to this move more and more frequently in the Catalan. One only has to recall the Petrosian-Spassky match (1966).

12 c5

The only correct reply, since White's strategy here is to gain space.

12 ... b4

13 ♘b1

The only way, in my opinion. Petrosian played 13 ♘a4, and the knight proved to be out of play. It was this that Zaitsev was counting on.

13 ... a5

14 ♘bd2 ♖a8

Black's plan is clear: to counter White's pressure in the centre he intends to create play on the a-file.

15 e4 ♘xe4

16 ♘xe4 dxe4

17 ♕xe4 ♘f6

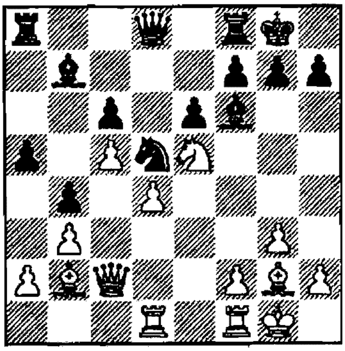
Too straightforward. First 17...a4 was preferable.

18 ♕c2 ♘d5

19 ♘e5

Now in the event of 19...a4 Black has to reckon with 20 bxa4 ♕a5 21 ♗xd5 cxd5 22 ♘d7 ♖fe8 23 ♘b6 ♖a7, when he has no time for ...♗c6 or ...♗d8 in view of 24 a3!

19 ... ♗f6



20 ♘c4

White continues playing in positional vein, although it was also possible to take a different course. During the game I was not firmly convinced that it was worth choosing the variation 20 ♗e4 g6 21 h4 a4 22 ♔g2 a3 23 ♗a1, when for some time the bishop is shut out of the game, although White has a fairly strong attack in prospect.

20 ... ♗a6

21 ♖fe1 ♗b5

A dubious move. 21...♕c7 is better, when White should play 22 ♗e4, with the follow-up given in the previous note. If instead Black replies 22...h6, then White's problem is to exchange the places of his queen and bishop.

22 ♘d6 ♕b8

Black should have admitted his mistake straight away, and played 22...♗a6.

23 ♗c1!

Emphasising the poor position of the black queen at b8. It turns out that 23...♘c3 now is bad on account of 24 a4! ♘xd1 25 ♖xd1 ♗a6 26 ♗xc6, with an overwhelming advantage.

23 ... ♗a6

24 ♗xd5 exd5

24...cxd5 was the lesser evil, although even then with 25 ♗f4 ♕d8 26 h4, followed by ♕d2, White builds up very strong pressure on the kingside.

25 ♗f4 ♕d8

26 ♗e5 ♗c8

27 ♖d3!

For the moment White plays the strongest moves. On 27 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 28 ♖e5 Black replies 28...♗e6, and prepares the advance ...a5-a4. But in the game White doubles rooks on the e-file without delay.

27 ... ♗e6

28 ♖de3 ♗e7

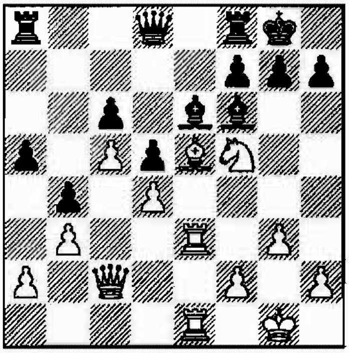
29 ♘f5

Instead of this, 29 f4 was suggested in the press-centre of the match, with the possible follow-up 29...♗xd6 30 ♗xd6 ♖e8 31 f5 ♗d7 32 ♖e7 or 32 ♗e7, and wins. But

Black has in reserve the reply 29...g6, and if 30 f5 ♗xd6 31 ♗xd6 ♗xf5 32 ♕f2 ♗e4, with adequate compensation for the exchange. If instead 31 fxe6, then 31...♗xe5 32 ♖xe5 ♕e7. White's position is of course rather more pleasant, but how much so?

29 . . . ♗f6

On 29...♗xf5 30 ♕xf5 ♖a7 White wins by 31 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 32 ♖xe7, while if 30... g6, then 31 ♕h3.



30 h4!

Following the slogan: 'No chances at all for the opponent!' The idea of this move is after h4-h5 to force the weakening ...h7-h6, and then to switch to the advance of the f-pawn. Possible exchanges in the centre are merely to White's advantage.

30 . . . ♗xe5
31 ♖xe5 ♗xf5
32 ♕xf5 a4

Black's one chance of obtaining any sort of counterplay.

33 ♔g2

Necessary prophylaxis, since on the immediate 33 ♖e7 there would follow 33... axb3 34 axb3 ♖a1!

33 . . . axb3
34 axb3 ♖a3
35 ♖1e3 ♖a7

Obligatory. Black cannot concede the seventh rank.

Here White decided to play for the adjournment, so as under calm conditions to find an accurate way of realising his advantage.

36 h5 h6
37 ♔h3 ♕a8
38 ♕f3 ♕c8+
39 ♔g2 ♖a2?

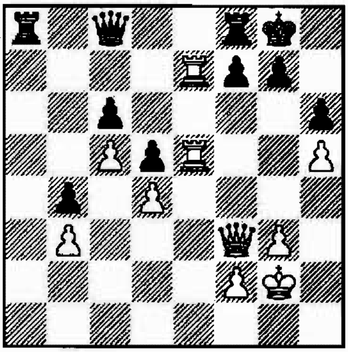
Black should have passively continued to control the seventh rank.

40 ♖e7 ♖d2
41 ♕f4 ♕b8
42 ♖3e5 ♖a2

In this way Black prolongs the resistance. 42...♖d3 was suggested by all the commentators here, and for some reason all of them considered that 43 ♕g4 was virtually obligatory for White. But after 42...♖d3 I was planning to win in three moves by 43 ♖d7 ♖xb3 44 ♕f5!, depriving the black rook of the b1 square. On 43...f6 White replies 44 ♖ee7, while 44...♕b5 is met decisively by 45 ♖xf7!

43 ♕e3 ♖a8
44 ♕e2 ♕c8
45 ♕f3

The last move before the adjournment, and not the best. Instead, 45 g4 would have put an end to the struggle.



45 . . . ♖a1

The sealed move. A long analysis showed that only 45...♕a6 would have caused White certain difficulties.

46 ♕e2

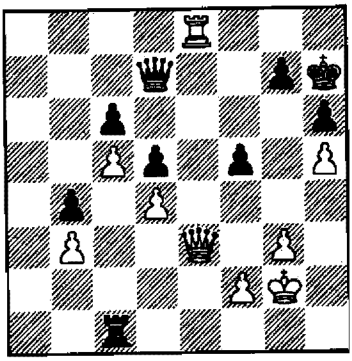
So as now on 46...♖a8 to reply 47 g4, with the possible follow-up 47...♕b8 48 ♕e3 ♔h7 49 g5 hxg5 50 h6! gxh6 (no better is 50...♕c8 51 ♖xg5 gxh6 52 ♕d3+ ♔h8 53 ♖g3 ♖g8 54 ♖xf7 ♖xg3+ 55 fxg3 ♖a2+ 56 ♔f3) 51 ♕d3+ ♔g8 52 ♖5e6, and wins.

True, the following line was also sufficient: 46 ♖f5 ♕a6 47 ♖fxf7 ♕f1+ 48 ♔h2 ♕g1+ 49 ♔h3 ♕h1+ 50 ♔g4 ♕xf3+ 51 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 52 ♔xf3, when, in the opinion of Zaitsev himself, White wins. I saw this line, but I did not wish to be diverted from my basic plan.

46 ... ♖c1

After 46...♕a6 47 ♕xa6 ♖xa6 48 ♖b7 the outcome of the game is, of course, decided.

47 ♖e8 ♕d7
48 ♖5e7 ♖xe8
49 ♖xe8+ ♔h7
50 ♕d3+ f5
51 ♕e3



51 ... ♖c3

This loses immediately. But equally hopeless is 51...♕f7, which was recommended by various commentators, and by Zaitsev himself, as giving drawing chances. They suggested the variation 52 ♖e7 ♕f6 (52...♕f8 53 ♕e6!), and thought that Black could count on saving the game after 53 ♖e6 ♕g5 54 ♕xg5 hxg5 55 ♖xc6 ♖d1.

But even here White wins by capturing the pawn immediately: 54 ♖xc6, when, in view of the threat of 55 ♕e8! with inevitable mate, Black himself is forced to exchange queens – 55...♕xe3 56 fxe3, and after 56...♖c3 57 ♔f3 ♖xb3 58 ♖b6 he can calmly resign.

True, instead of 53...♕g5 Black has a stronger continuation (missed by the commentators) – 53...♕f7, but now White has a choice between a queen ending with good winning chances (54 ♖xh6+ gxh6 55 ♕xc1 ♕xh5 56 ♕f4), and the equally promising variation 54 ♖xc6 ♖c3 55 ♕e2 ♖xb3 56 ♖b6 ♖c3 57 ♖xb4 f4 58 ♕d2.

The most curious thing, however, is that the tempting 53 ♖e6 is simply unnecessary for White!

He wins instantly by continuing 53 ♖c7! The black rook is attacked, and 53...♖c3 is decisively met by 54 ♕e8 ♕g5 55 ♖xc6. There remains one last chance: 53...♖c2 54 ♕e8 f4 55 ♖xc6 ♖xf2+ 56 ♔g1, and it is all over.

Thus it is hardly correct to attach a question mark to 51...♖c3.

52 ♕e5 f4
53 ♕b8 f3+
54 ♔h2 Black resigns

After this encounter I began to scent victory, I became completely composed, and I was able to regulate, so to speak, the coordination between my thinking and my actions (sometimes you think of one move, but for some reason make another).

With the score standing at 2½-2½ I succeeded in winning the final game.

But it was not after this game, but after the fourth, that I began to believe that, by bringing myself into the necessary frame of mind, corresponding most exactly to the specific nature of the moment, I could achieve my goal in the most difficult and crucial of encounters.

WILL THE WIND BE FAVOURABLE?

In the practice of every player there are games that play a highly important role: they enable him to realise the degree of his own state of preparedness for the battle. World Champion Anatoly Karpov, for example, has this to say: 'From the first game I do not expect a point, so much as an answer to the silent question about my form. And, depending on how my play goes, I plan my tactics for the entire tournament.'

It is this that characterises the following game. It was played at the start of the International Hoogoven Tournament at Beverwijk in 1966, in which I took first place. It showed that my thinking was easy, and that I was seeing subtleties; in short, I was in good form. This meant that I could play boldly and trust myself, and in this lies the foundation of success.

So that, without being decisive, this game helped me to win important, genuinely decisive encounters later, at the height of the tournament battle.

Bobotsov-Polugayevsky
Beverwijk 1966
Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 e6
3 ♘f3 b6
4 ♘c3 ♗b7
5 ♗g5 h6
6 ♗h4 g5
7 ♗g3 ♘h5

Introduced by Botvinnik. Black obtains the two bishops, although true, slightly to the detriment of his development. However, the position is of a closed nature, and the loss of a tempo is not so important.

I played this variation against Bobotsov in 1963 at the Chigorin Memorial Tournament in Sochi, and won after a complicated struggle. But my opponent retained his opinion on the opening, and was not averse to trying it again. For me it was interesting to know what my opponent would have to say that was new on this occasion.

8 e3 ♘xg3
9 hxg3 ♗g7
10 g4

A necessary move, since otherwise Black himself plays ...g5-g4, driving the knight to h4, where it has little future.

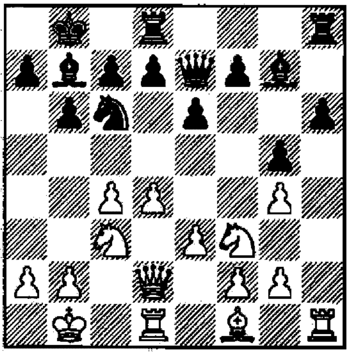
10 ... ♘c6

10...d6 could have been answered by 11 d5, with play on the weakened light squares. But now 11 d5 is well met by 11...♘e5.

11 ♕d2

Bobotsov avoids 'repeating the past'. In our game from 1973 he continued 11 ♕c2 followed by 12 a3. It seems to me that Bobotsov's new move is more logical. White can hope for an opening advantage only if he should succeed in restricting the scope of the black bishops. In certain cases this aim can be served by the d4-d5 advance; with the queen at d2 this is more feasible.

11 ... ♕e7
12 0-0-0 0-0-0
13 ♔b1 ♔b8



The position reached is difficult in the strategical sense for both sides. In such positions everything is built on nuances: the slightest inaccuracy may unexpectedly prove decisive. Whereas Black's last move parries the possible threat of ♘b5 and d4-d5, the analogous move by White's king is not at all necessary, and is a waste of time. Bobotsov clearly assumed that Black had no active plan, but such a plan can in fact be found.

14 ♗e2 ♕f8!

By this unexpected and veiled manoeuvre Black seizes the initiative. He now threatens by ...f7-f5 to open up the game, which, with his long-range bishops, will gain him an appreciable advantage. On 15 ♗d3 ♘b4 16 ♗e4 d5 17 cxd5 Black can play not only 17...exd5, but also 17...f5, with favourable complications (thanks to the bad placing of the king at b1!).

15 d5

White takes counter-measures. But in blocking the diagonal of one of the black bishops, he opens the way for the other.

15 ... ♘e5

16 ♘d4 c5!

This strong move was overlooked by my opponent. He considered only 16...♕c5, which after 17 ♘b3 or 17 ♖c1 gives White counterplay on the c-file. But now the white knight must abandon its central position, since the opening of the game after 17 dxc6 dxc6 is clearly in Black's favour.

17 ♘c2 f5!

18 gxf5 ♕xf5

19 f4

The natural reaction to Black's 17th move. After the game Bobotsov expressed the opinion that 19 f3 followed by 20 e4 would have been stronger. But in this case the dark squares in White's position would have been seriously weakened, and this would have become noticeable after ...♘g6 and ...♕f6.

19 ... gxf4

20 exf4 ♘f7

21 ♗d3 ♕f6

22 ♘e3 ♘d6!

Once again Black successfully regroups his forces. From d6 the knight covers e4, and assures the queen of its strong position at f6.

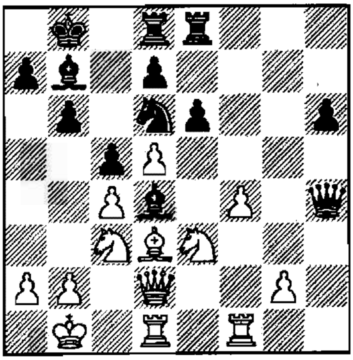
23 ♖hf1 ♖he8

24 ♘g4 ♕h4

25 ♘e3

25 ♘e5 costs a pawn after 25...♗xe5 26 fxe5 ♘xc4.

25 ... ♗d4



26 dxe6?

Equivalent to suicide. White could have maintained the balance by playing 26 ♘c2, but then Black can regroup with 26...♗h8! 27 ♘e3 ♕g3 followed by 28...♕g7 and 29...♖g8. Such a piece set-up would have tied down White's forces to a considerable extent, while Black would have had various active plans. After 26 dxe6? the game is opened up, and White's position immediately becomes critical.

26 ... dxe6

27 ♕e2 ♕g3

The start of a forcing variation. The g2 pawn is indefensible.

28 ♘g4 ♕xg2

29 ♘xh6 ♕h3

This wins the exchange, since the threat of 30...♗g2 31 ♖fe1 ♗f3 cannot be parried.

30 ♘g4 ♗g2

31	**♘e5**	**♗xf1**
32	**♖xf1**	**♗xe5**
33	**♕xe5**	

An oversight in a hopeless position. But after 33 fxe5 ♘b5 34 ♘xb5 ♕xd3+ White similarly has no hope of saving the game.

33	**...**	**♕xd3+**

White resigns

THE CHALLENGE HAD TO BE ACCEPTED

Najdorf-Polugayevsky

Mar del Plata 1971

Nimzo-Indian Defence

For me this game acquired greater significance than usual, although this happened against my will. It was played in the sixth round, when I already had five 'ones' in the tournament table. To be honest, I was therefore not too aggressively inclined: a draw, especially with Black, would merely have strengthened my tournament position. But the cheerful veteran Miguel Najdorf had other ideas: 'A tournament in Mar del Plata without Najdorf is not a tournament!' he exclaimed. 'I have won all the tournaments here! Ten times! Against everyone I play only for a win!'

And although as regards Najdorf's ten victories in Mar del Plata one might have doubts, this last assertion by the Argentine grandmaster did indeed correspond to the truth. When the opening stage of the game was concluded, and before my 11th move I offered a draw, it was declined. 'That's fine,' I thought, 'now it will be my turn to decline...'

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**e6**
3	**♘c3**	**♗b4**
4	**e3**	**0-0**
5	**♗d3**	**c5**
6	**♘f3**	**d5**
7	**0-0**	**dxc4**
8	**♗xc4**	**♘c6**

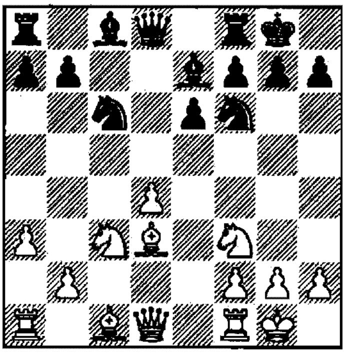
Following its adoption by Larsen in his match with Portisch in 1965, this variation has become firmly established in tournament practice.

9	**♗d3**	

Najdorf's favourite move. At the time the main continuation here was considered to be 9 a3 ♗a5 10 ♕d3 a6 11 ♖d1 b5 12 ♗a2, as occurred, for instance, in my game with Portisch from the 1970 Interzonal Tournament in Palma de Mallorca.

9	**...**	**cxd4**
10	**exd4**	**♗e7**
11	**a3**	

An essential part of White's set-up. The manoeuvre ...♘b4-d5 has to be prevented.



11	**...**	**a6**

A few rounds earlier Gheorghiu had continued 11...b6 followed by ...♗b7 against Najdorf, and obtained a good position. I decided against this, and not simply because I feared an improvement on the part of my highly-experienced opponent. Black's plan with ...b7-b6 is, in my opinion, passive, and later it is difficult for him to obtain counterplay. What convinced me of this was a considerable amount of analytical work, which was later tested in several games, for instance, against Portisch in the matches between the Russian Federation and Hungary.

Much more active and crucial is the plan begun by the move in the game with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5, which I had planned in my preparations prior to this game. Black, although he wastes a tempo, gains numerous interesting possibilities. Thus he can worry White with ...b5-b4 (which in fact occurred in the present game), he can occupy the square c4 by the manoeuvre ...♘a5-c4, or finally, in the event of the exchange of the knight at c3, the b5 pawn prevents the creation of a mobile white pawn pair c4/d4.

Jumping ahead, it should be mentioned that it was this plan that inflicted a severe blow on White's opening set-up.

12 ♗c2

White's plan is obvious – to set up the queen-bishop battery on the b1-h7 diagonal, and then after ♖d1 to prepare the d4-d5 break. Its drawback is the fact that it is rather slow.

12 ... b5
13 ♕d3 ♗b7
14 ♖e1!

A cunning move. Outwardly it would appear that 14 ♖d1 is more logical. I became suspicious, since the rook move was made after prolonged thought. Soon I saw that after the natural 14...♖c8 15 d5 exd5 16 ♗g5 g6 17 ♖xe7 White wins.

14 ... g6
15 ♗b3

An unsuccessful manoeuvre, although one can understand White's desire to transfer his bishop to a more promising position. Better was 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♖ad1, with a complicated game.

15 ... ♖c8

Najdorf had reckoned only on 15...♘a5 16 ♗a2 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♕xd4, but I did not even consider taking such a 'poisoned' pawn.

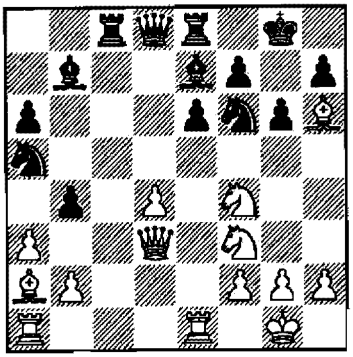
16 ♗h6 ♖e8
17 ♗a2 b4
18 ♘e2?

As the Argentine grandmaster explained after the game, he erroneously assumed that the advantage was on his side. Black is already fully mobilised, and is ready for a battle on any part of the board. The positionally correct decision was 18 ♘a4, attempting to exploit the weakness of the c5 square. I was intending to reply 18...♘a5, and if 19 axb4 ♘c6, e.g. 20 ♘c5 ♘xb4 21 ♕b3 ♗xf3 22 ♕xb4 ♗d5, with roughly equal chances. But instead of this, White begins playing for a win, and burns his boats behind him.

18 ... ♘a5!

Black not only uncovers his bishop, but also sets a concealed trap, into which his opponent falls.

19 ♘f4



19 ... b3!

The beginning of a lengthy combination, which demanded exact calculation on Black's part.

20 ♗xb3 ♗e4!
21 ♕d1

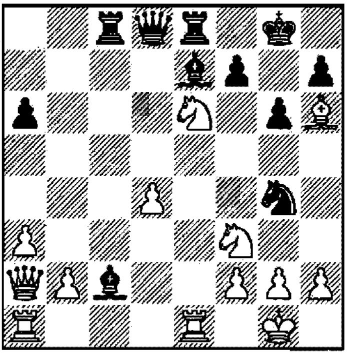
If White had seen a little further, he would undoubtedly have given up the exchange: 21 ♖xe4 ♘xb3 22 ♕xb3 ♘xe4 23 ♘xe6, although even here 23...♕d6 leaves Black with the advantage.

21 ... ♘xb3
22 ♕xb3 ♗c2!

The point of Black's pawn sacrifice is

revealed. His main efforts are directed towards trapping the bishop at h6.

23 ♕a2 ♘g4
24 ♘xe6



24 ... ♕b6!

Najdorf had missed this concluding stroke of the combination. Loss of material for White is now inevitable.

25 ♘g7 ♗b3
26 ♕b1 ♖ed8!

26...♘xh6 27 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 is also quite good, but now Black wins a whole piece, and the game is soon over.

27 ♘f5 gxf5 28 ♖xe7 ♘xh6 29 ♕d3 ♕f6 30 ♖a7 ♗c4 31 ♕d2 ♗d5 32 ♘e5 ♘g4 33 ♕f4 ♘xe5 34 dxe5 ♕g6 35 g3 ♗e4 36 ♖e1 ♖d3 37 e6 ♕xe6 White resigns

THE DREAM COMES TRUE

I will always remember the year of 1973, for it was then that I first overcame the Interzonal barrier, and emerged as one of the Candidates for the World Championship. This was preceded by some fairly dramatic events at the finish of the Interzonal Tournament in Petropolis, which I have described elsewhere.†

There, in the final round, I succeeded in defeating the previously undefeated tournament leader, Lajos Portisch, thus finishing in a tie for first place with Portisch and my compatriot Yefim Geller.

I was in the seventh heaven! This might appear unjustified: after all, there lay ahead – with practically no rest – an additional event between three equal grandmasters, each of whom could turn out to be the 'unlucky third'. It is true that, on the system of coefficients, I was second at Petropolis (behind Geller and ahead of Portisch), and this meant that a 50% score in the Match-Tournament would assure me of a place among the Candidates. But, more important, knowing myself and certain aspects of my character, I was sure that this victory over Portisch would provide a stimulus of colossal strength.

In passing, I must admit that I was wrong regarding something else: Portisch, whom at heart I had already 'buried', bounced back, and found in himself the spiritual strength in particular which was necessary for the new elimination event, and fairly soon achieved one of the most important victories of his career...

Before the Match-Tournament started, in my preparations I had two basic problems to solve. One, the more general, was whether to spend the ten available days at the board, so as to attempt to give battle in the opening to my two opponents, both acknowledged theorists, or whether to allow myself a complete rest. After some hesitation I chose the latter, since I considered that, in such a tense situation, in the end everything would be decided by nerves.

Nevertheless, it was not possible for me to avoid chess entirely, since there was another, this time specific, problem: what to do in one of the variations of the Sicilian Defence, which, I thought, Geller might well employ against me?

---

† Cf. the author's *Grandmaster Performance*, also published by Cadogan (translator's note).

For two days, practically without distraction, I thought – true, without a board – about the critical position of this variation. The solution came to me during my wanderings through the forest (I devoted virtually the whole time to these walks). Then came a short but careful check at the board, and in the very first round the innovation was put into operation, and decided, possibly, not only the fate of this one game, but also the result of my involuntary duel with Geller for the second vacant place in the Candidates Matches.

Geller-Polugayevsky

Interzonal Play-off, Portoroz 1973

Sicilian Defence

1	**e4**	**c5**
2	**♘f3**	**d6**
3	**d4**	**cxd4**
4	**♘xd4**	**♘f6**
5	**♘c3**	**a6**
6	**♗g5**	**e6**
7	**f4**	**♘bd7**

I frequently employ this move instead of the approved 7...♗e7, reserving the option of making the bishop move later, so as to be able to begin counterplay on the queenside as quickly as possible.

8	**♕f3**	**♕c7**
9	**0-0-0**	**b5**
10	**♗d3**	

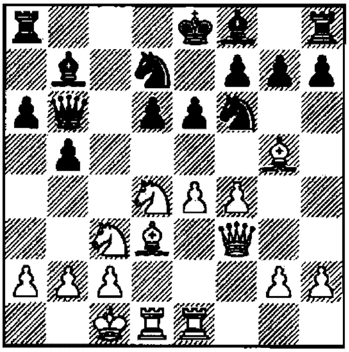
After the match for the World Championship in Reykjavik, this move quickly gained in popularity. True, Fischer did not play 7...♘bd7, but 7...♗e7. But it can readily be assumed that Spassky had prepared 10 ♗d3 against both methods of development for Black. And of course to Geller, who had worked with Spassky during the period of the match, these continuations must have been very familiar.

10	**...**	**♗b7**
11	**♖he1**	**♕b6**

This variation occurred in my game with Geller from the international tournament at Kislovodsk (1972), where I played 11...h6, and after 12 ♗h4 ♗e7 13 ♘d5?! ♘xd5 14 exd5 ♗xh4 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♕h5+ ♔d8 White gained a strong attack, although I succeeded in beating it off and winning.

But later, in the 1973 AVRO Tournament, the young Dutch master Jan Timman employed against me an important improvement – 12 ♕h3! The game continued 12... 0-0-0 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 ♘d5 ♕a5? 15 ♘b3, and Black resigned, since he loses his queen, but even after 14...♘xd5 15 exd5 ♗xd5 16 a4 White has the advantage.

For the moment it is difficult to say whether after 12 ♕h3 Black has any satisfactory means of defence, but certainly the move 11...h6 has been struck a serious blow. Therefore in the present game I chose a new move, prepared beforehand – 11... ♕b6. Of course, it is a risky experiment to make a second move with the queen while leaving the remaining pieces in their places, but at the board it was not easily refuted, and my opponent Geller was unable to cope with this task.



12	**♘xe6**	

Over this move Geller thought for 90(!) minutes. But he was unlucky. The point was that I had analysed this tempting sacrifice at home, when I was preparing 11...♕b6, and this naturally made things easier for me at the board. In a game from the USSR Championship Premier League (1973), Spassky chose the quiet 12 ♘b3 against Tukmakov, and after 12...b4 13 ♘a4 ♕c7 14 ♘d4 ♗e7 15 ♕h3 ♘c5 16 ♘xc5 dxc5 he also sacrificed his knight – 17 ♘xe6, but in a more favourable situation for White.

12 ... fxe6
13 ♕h3 e5

In the event of 13...♘c5 14 e5 (14 ♗xf6 is also possible) 14...dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘xd3+ 16 ♖xd3 ♘d5 17 ♘e4 White's attack is highly dangerous. The move played by Black seems dubious, since it gives White the d5 square, but what is much more important is the fact that for a certain time Black blocks the bishop at d3, and neutralises the pressure on the e-file. I gained the impression that, for all the 90 minutes spent by Geller, he had nevertheless not foreseen the consequences of this reply.

It should also be mentioned that, after 13...0-0-0 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d5 16 ♗xd8 ♔xd8, White's rook and pawn are stronger than the two minor pieces, in view of the poor position of the black king.

14 ♘d5

Essential, so as to open the diagonal for his bishop at d3, and also the e-file, but in the process one of White's most dangerous pieces – his knight, is eliminated. In the event of 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 (or 14...♘xf6 15 ♕e6+ ♗e7 16 fxe5 ♗c8) 15 ♕e6+ ♗e7 Black's defences hold.

14 ... ♗xd5
15 exd5 0-0-0!
16 ♗f5

Apart from this move, White also has several other ways of continuing the attack. He can, for instance, win another pawn by 16 fxe5 dxe5 17 ♖xe5, but in this case Black's dark-square bishop comes into play, and so for the moment Geller avoids capturing on e5.

16 ... ♔c7!

Black defends coolly, not fearing any illusory threats. 16...exf4 could have been played, but this seemed excessively optimistic to me. Here is one curious variation: 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♖e8 ♖xe8 19 ♗xd7+ ♔d8 20 ♗xe8 ♕e3+. The move played is more critical.

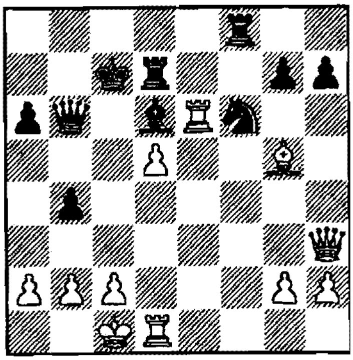
17 ♖e3

This move can hardly be approved, since all the same the advance ...b5-b4 comes into Black's plans. White should nevertheless have played 17 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 18 fxe5, gaining one pawn, and with the prospect of winning another, although I still prefer Black's position.

17 ... b4
18 fxe5 dxe5!

Avoiding the temptation of 18...♘xe5, since after 19 ♗xf6 gxf6, although Black has an extra bishop, it is 'bad'. White could still have attempted to confuse matters by 20 ♖b3.

19 ♗xd7 ♖xd7
20 ♖xe5 ♗d6
21 ♖e6 ♖f8



Here we can take stock. Black has beaten off the attack, while retaining his extra piece, and all his pieces occupy excellent positions. White's two pawns are inadequate compensation. But even so, things would not have been so simple (for instance, after 22 ♕h4), had it not been for Geller's error on his next move:

22 ♔b1? ♘xd5!

Eliminating the chief enemy. On 23 ♖xd5 Black wins by 23...♖f1+ 24 ♗c1 ♖xc1+ 25 ♔xc1 ♗f4+. The remainder is simple.

23 ♕b3 ♖f5 24 ♗h4 ♕b5 25 ♖ee1 ♖e5 26 ♗g3 ♖xe1 27 ♖xe1 ♗xg3 28 ♕xg3+ ♔b7 29 a3 a5 30 axb4 axb4 31 ♕f3 ♕c6 32 ♕f5 g6 33 ♕f3 ♖c7 34 ♕d3 ♕c4 35 ♕d1 ♖f7 36 ♕d2 ♖d7 37 ♕f2 b3! 38 cxb3 ♕xb3

White lost on time.

WHEN EXPERIENCE HELPS

Polugayevsky-Kavalek

Solingen 1974

King's Indian Defence

Of course, it is by no means obligatory – and also practically impossible – always to occupy only first place in tournaments. But not to dream about it, and not to aim for it, is equally impossible.

At any rate, that is how it is for me. And it so happened that this game decided the fate of first prize in the international tournament at Solingen. Before the last round Kavalek was leading me by one point, and only victory in our individual encounter would enable me to catch him.

By that time, as the reader will know, I had accumulated some experience in playing decisive games. And I think it was for this reason that psychologically I was better off than my opponent, and that I knew how to play such games.

The secret is simple: you must conduct the game as though it is of precisely no importance, but at the same time instill into each move all of your internal energy, concentrate extremely hard, and attempt to foresee anything unexpected.

True, this is easier said than done, but here I was hopeful of success, although from the purely chess point of view it is easier to gain a draw than a win. Especially against a strong opponent.

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 c5

Kavalek's main opening weapon. Although he would have been perfectly happy to draw this game, he chooses a variation that is considered rather hazardous.

3 d5 d6
4 ♘c3 g6
5 e4 ♗g7
6 ♗d3

Normally this bishop is developed at e2. But Kavalek is a good theorist, and therefore I decided to deviate from the well-trodden paths, and to choose a less well-studied continuation. Formerly such a set-up was successfully employed by Botvinnik, and recently – by Balashov. I sensed that my opponent would be less familiar with the subtleties of 6 ♗d3.

6 ... 0-0
7 h3

Necessary prophylaxis. In the event of 7 ♘f3 White has to reckon with the reply 7...♗g4.

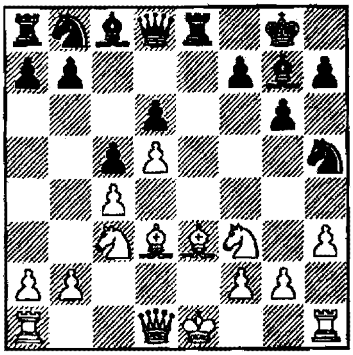
7 ... e6
8 ♘f3 exd5
9 exd5

The alternative capture, 9 cxd5, is of course answered by the conventional 9...b5. But now the position reached is similar in spirit to normal variations of the King's Indian, except that White's bishop is already at d3. Thus White economises on an important tempo.

9 ... ♖e8+
10 ♗e3 ♘h5

Some time ago, when Botvinnik began employing this system as White, Kavalek played 10...♗h6 against him (Wijk aan Zee 1969). But it was soon found that after 11 0-0 ♗xe3 12 fxe3 ♖xe3 13 ♕d2 White gains a dangerous initiative, which more than compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

The move of the knight to h5 has the aim of then playing ...f7-f5, so as to restrict one enemy bishop (the light-square), and to 'disturb' the other. But the plan loses time, and in addition the knight is badly placed on the edge of the board.



11 0-0 f5
12 ♕d2 ♘d7
13 ♖ae1

Why in particular this rook? Because the other may yet come in useful on the f-file, if, say, White should decide to play f2-f4.

13 ... ♘df6

A dubious move, after which Black's knights get in each others' way. He should have aimed for simplification by 13...♘e5, e.g. 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗g5 ♕b6, and although White's position is preferable, nothing definite is apparent.

14 ♗h6

The plan beginning with 14 ♘g5 was to be very seriously considered. Black is 'plagued' by the presence of the knight at g5, and seems to be forced to play 14...h6. But then the h6 pawn comes under attack, and by 15 ♘e6 White activates his bishops.

I chose a different plan, involving the exchange of the dark-square bishops, which also gives White an advantage.

14 ... ♗d7

15 ♗xg7

White could have delayed this exchange. 15 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 16 a3 was probably more accurate.

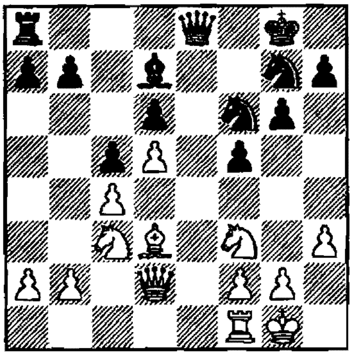
15 ... ♘xg7

15...♔xg7 leaves Black indifferently placed. E.g. 16 ♘g5 h6 17 ♘e6+ ♗xe6 18 dxe6 ♕c8 19 ♗e2! ♖xe6 20 ♗xh5 ♘xh5 (to 20...gxh5 there are several good replies: 21 ♕f4, 21 ♘b5, 21 ♖xe6 etc.) 21 ♘d5 ♘f6 22 ♕c3, and Black is in a catastrophic position.

16 ♖xe8+

16 ♕h6 achieves nothing after 16...♖xe1 17 ♖xe1 ♕f8!

16 ... ♕xe8



17 a3!

This simple move proves to be highly effective.

The plan with b2-b4 is normally carried out with the dark-square bishops still on the board. In the game, White plans to open the b-file, and then, by playing ♕g5, to divert the black queen, whereupon he can occupy the b-file. This idea is reflected in the variation 18 b4 b6 19 bxc5 bxc5 20 ♕g5 ♕e7 21 ♖b1.

17 ... a5

Played after prolonged thought. However, the correct reply was 17...♕f8, and if 18 b4 b6, when Black is able to hold the position. But after ...a7-a5 White is not averse to the exchange of bishops, after which his knights will dominate the board, threatening to invade at b5 or e6.

18 ♗c2!

This manoeuvre emphasises the inadequacy of Black's previous move.

18 ... ♕f5

Black hopes after 19 ♗a4 ♗xa4 20 ♘xa4 to play 20...♘e4.

19 ♖e1 ♖e8

20 ♖xe8

Now it would seem that the variation 20 ♗a4 ♗xa4 21 ♘xa4 ♘e4 22 ♕xa5 should suit White, but by 20...♖xe1 21 ♕xe1 ♕e8! Black avoids danger.

20 ... ♕xe8

21 ♕g5!

As before, White plans to divert the black queen, and only then carry out the exchange of bishops. Despite the numerous exchanges, Black is still in serious difficulties.

21 ... ♕e7

21...♘gh5 is the correct defence, when although the positions of both knights appear shaky, Black can prepare ...♔g7, so as to drive back the queen.

22 ♔f1

The tension of the struggle and the importance of the game were so great that I committed an annoying mistake. After 22 ♗a4 ♗xa4 23 ♘xa4 ♘ge8 24 ♘c3 White has complete control of the position. One knight aims to penetrate into the enemy position via b5, and the other – via e6. The presence of the queens merely complicates Black's defence, since he also has to reckon with g2-g4. Forgetting that the black queen was tied to the defence of the knight at f6, I decided to move my king, so as to parry the imaginary threat of an intrusion at e2. After this the greater part of White's advantage is lost, and by exact play Black could have put up a successful defence.

22 ... ♘ge8

23 ♕h6

The exchange 23 ♗a4 ♗xa4 24 ♘xa4 is bad in view of 24...♕e4, but nevertheless White should have tried a different plan – 23 a4 (or first 23 ♘e2). By this White prevents ...b7-b5, completely blocks the queenside, and changes course, beginning play on the other side of the board.

23 ... ♘c7

The best place for the knight. From here it covers the breaches at b5 and e6, and at the same time prepares the counter ...b7-b5.

24 ♗d3 ♕e8

25 ♕g5

White makes a last attempt to maintain his initiative. After 25...♕e7 I would probably have reverted to the plan with 26 a4 and 27 ♘e2, aiming to transfer the knight to f4. But 25...♔f7 was possibly most exact, on which I was intending to play 26 ♕f4, and after a3-a4 White has a minimal advantage.

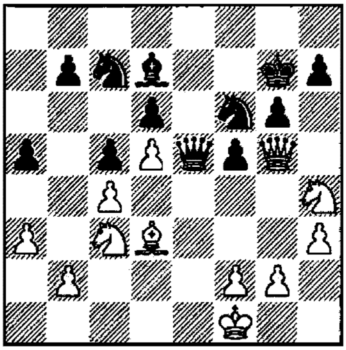
25 ... ♔g7

This move allowed me, with the time scramble approaching, to greatly complicate the position.

26 ♘h4!

Now great accuracy is required on Black's part. But Kavalek incautiously played

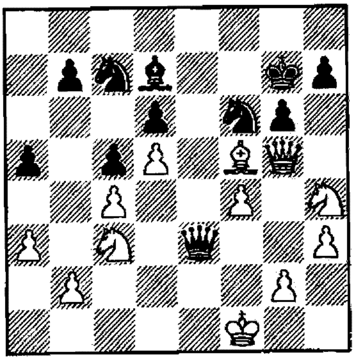
26 ... ♕e5



Later it was discovered that, although this move does not lose, it leaves Black facing great difficulties: with time short, he is forced to find several exact replies. 26...♔f7 was essential (if 27 g4, then 27...fxg4 28 ♘xg6 ♕g8), and Black can hold on. Kavalek played 26...♕e5, thinking that White's next move was too committing.

27 f4 ♕d4

After this Black's position can no longer be saved. During the game I thought that 27...♕e3 28 ♗xf5 ♕c1+ 29 ♔f2 (or 29 ♔e2 ♕xb2+ 30 ♔d3) 29...♕xb2+ 30 ♔g1 left White with quite good winning chances. Kavalek had in mind the same variations. But after the game, during analysis, a miraculous possibility was found for Black: 27...♕e3 28 ♗xf5.



28...♘cxd5! The point of this unexpected sacrifice is revealed in the variation 29 cxd5 ♘h5 (the immediate 28...♘h5 is parried by 29 ♘e2) 30 ♘e2 ♗b5, when Black even wins!

If on 28...♘cxd5 White replies 29 ♘e2, then Black is rescued by 29...♘e7! White is therefore forced to play 29 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 30 ♗xd7 ♕c1+, with perpetual check.

28 ♗xf5 ♕xc4+
29 ♔g1 ♘cxd5
30 ♗xd7 ♕xf4

No better is 30...♘xc3 31 ♘f5+ ♔g8 32 ♕xf6 ♘e2+ 33 ♔f2.

31 ♕xf4 ♘xf4 32 ♗b5 d5 33 ♘f3 d4 34 ♘a4 ♘e4 35 ♘e5 ♘e6 36 ♗c4 ♘c7 37 ♗d3 b5 38 ♗xe4 bxa4 39 ♗d3 ♘e6 40 ♗c4 ♘f4 41 ♔f2 Black resigns

TURNING THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Hort-Polugayevsky
Vinkovci 1976
Sicilian Defence

I was prompted to include this among my decisive games by considerations by no means competitive in nature. The fact is that in chess there has always existed, and always will exist, the problem of the awkward opponent. For the moment, at any rate, it has yet to be explained why, in meetings between two players of equal class, one suffers constant failures, and what's more, over a period of many years. Thus, for instance, Mikhail Tal used to lose systematically to Isaac Boleslavsky and Rashid Nezhmetdinov, who did not achieve anything like the successes of the ex-World Champion.

Some have attempted to explain this correlation in terms of playing styles. They say that Tal was primarily a tactician, and that his combinations used to founder on Boleslavsky's impregnable defensive lines, whereas Nezhmetdinov, himself a master of attack, successfully used to counter fantasy with fantasy.

I am sure that this is not so. Otherwise one cannot explain the same Tal's victories over the invincible Ratmir Kholmov and Petar Trifunovic, or his ability to confuse in complications such specialists in tactical play as David Bronstein, Miguel Najdorf and Ljubomir Ljubojevic.

In addition, one cannot explain in terms of any styles the 180° reversal in chess 'relations' between, for example, Yefim Geller and Vasily Smyslov. Up to a certain time Smyslov had virtually a clean score against Geller. Then they played a match for the title of USSR Champion. After six draws Geller won the very first additional game, and...

Since then nearly 40 years has passed, and in all that time the ex-World Champion has lost far more games against Geller than he has managed to draw.

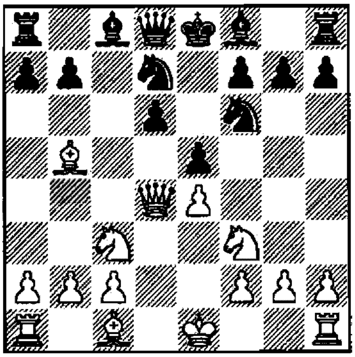
Therefore I will also not venture to try and diagnose my former results against Vlastimil Hort. For more than 15 years I was unable to win even once. I suffered one defeat in the 'Match of the Century', and all the rest – draws, draws, draws...

Only in this game did I succeed in crossing some invisible psychological barrier.

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 d6
3 ♗b5+ ♘d7

I did not wish to play 3...♗d7, where White has a slight advantage and the draw 'in hand'.

4 d4 ♘gf6
5 ♘c3 cxd4
6 ♕xd4 e5



This move was tested in the 1975 USSR Championship in the games Dvoretsky-Tal and Dvoretsky-Geller. Its drawbacks are obvious – the d5 square!

On the other hand, Black gains a tempo for development. At any rate, in the above-mentioned games Tal and Geller were able to cope with their opening difficulties. Besides, the position reached is highly unusual...

7 ♕d3 h6

Evidently necessary in the battle for d5, otherwise the pin on the knight at f6 can prove highly unpleasant.

8 h3

But this is wrong! The black knight has no intention of going to g4 (after ♗e3). Its job is to control d5.

8 ... a6
9 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7
10 0-0 ♗e7
11 a4 ♖c8
12 a5

Things don't get as far as a blockade of the queenside, whereas the pawn at a5 is a weakness. Better therefore was the immediate 12 ♖d1.

12 ... ♗e6
13 ♖d1 ♕c7

Preparing a possible ...♕c4, since the exchange of queens is clearly in Black's favour (the two bishops!). At the same time Black prevents 14 ♗e3, on which there follows 14...♗c4 15 ♕d2 ♕c6, when the e4 pawn is attacked.

14 ♘d2

The knight heads for e3 via f1.

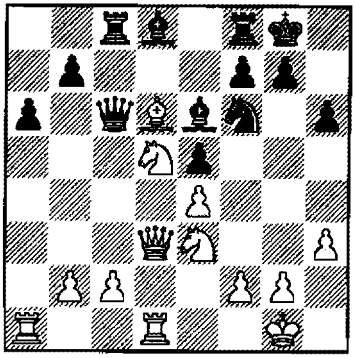
14 ... 0-0
15 ♘f1 ♕c5!
16 ♘e3 ♗d8

Now White should have gone in for simplification – 17 ♕xd6 ♗xa5 18 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 19 ♘cd5 ♗d8, with equality. But Hort overrates his position.

17 ♗d2

Apparently indirectly defending the a5 pawn, but Black has worked everything out exactly.

17 ... ♗xa5
18 ♘cd5 ♗d8!
19 ♗b4 ♕c6
20 ♗xd6



20 ... ♗xd5!

By a sacrifice of the exchange Black seizes the initiative.

21 ♗xf8 ♗xe4

22 ♕a3

During the game I thought that White must have been pinning his hopes on 22 ♕d6, and only later did I notice that this loses immediately to 22...♕e8.

22 ... ♗b6

23 ♗e7 ♘h5

The simple 23...♘e8, defending d6, would have given Black full compensation for the exchange, in view of the threat of 24...♕g6. But should he be judged so severely for his desire to also include his knight in the attack?

24 ♖d6!

Hort is equal to the task! By blocking the black queen's path to g6, White achieves coordination of his pieces.

24 ... ♕c7

25 ♖ad1 ♗d4

26 c3

Of course, 26 ♖6xd4 exd4 27 ♖xd4 was essential. Now Black's attack becomes decisive.

26 ... ♗xe3

27 ♖d8+ ♔h7!

A subtlety which White had not taken into account: on 28 ♖xc8 Black has the *zwischenzug* 28...♗xf2+.

28 fxe3 ♕b6!

The rook at c8 is invulnerable, in view of the threat of mate in three moves.

29 ♔f2 ♖xd8

30 ♗xd8

Later, during analysis, Hort stated that it was this move that was the cause of White's defeat. However, after 30 ♖xd8 Black has the very strong moves 30...♘f4, or even 30...♘g3!?, with the threat of 31...♘h1+!; the capture of the knight leads to mate: 31 ♔xg3 ♕xe3+ 32 ♔h2 ♕f2.

30 ... ♕g6

31 g4 ♘f6

32 ♖g1

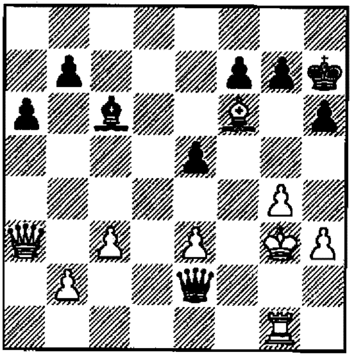
On this move White used up his last reserves of time. He rejected 32 ♕d6 on account of the possible 32...♗c2 33 ♗xf6 ♗xd1 34 ♗xe5 ♕c2+ 35 ♔g3 ♕e2, with very dangerous threats; incidentally, White also has to reckon with 32...♘xg4+.

32 ... ♗c6

33 ♗xf6 ♕c2+

The quiet 33...♕xf6+ 34 ♔e1 ♕h4+ would also have won, but it was highly tempting to conclude the game with an attack.

34 ♔g3 ♕e2



White is a rook up, but there is no salvation.

A curious mate results now after 35 ♗h4 ♕xe3+ 36 ♔h2 ♕f4+, when if 37 ♗g3 there is a mate by 37...♛c2+, and if 37 ♜g3 by 37...♛f2+.

35 ♝xg7 ♛xe3+
36 ♚h4 ♚xg7
37 ♛e7

Or 37 ♜f1 ♝g2.

37 ... ♛xg1
38 ♛xe5+ f6
White resigns

WHO WILL MAKE A STEP FORWARD?

My match with Mecking, Lucerne 1977

Here there was not just one very important game. Here the entire match was very important. And, I would guess, for both players. Both of us had reached the Candidates for the second time, on the first occasion each of us had suffered immediate failure, and we both needed to make a step forward. I also attempted to rouse myself with the thought that the years were passing, and that I could not rest content with what had been achieved.

But to want to win, and to actually win, are two quite different things. Besides, in my preparations numerous difficulties came to light. Henrique Mecking was young, he was developing, and – as, however, I mentioned earlier in my comments on the match with Alexander Zaitsev – his games of even two years earlier said precisely nothing. But for all his youth, Mecking had experience of match play, and as a match player he was not at all bad...

But youth, apart from a mass of virtues, also has its vulnerable points. Thus I made the assumption that it was opening surprises that could put Mecking out of his normal stride.

And I decided to change my repertoire, especially as Black. I abandoned my favourite and faithful schemes, and switched to a certain variation of the Sicilian Defence, which formerly I had never played. In such a decision there was a degree of risk, but I analysed the variation very thoroughly, found in it several new ideas, unnoticed by theory, and was in no doubt that for 3-4 games in a match against 1 e4 this variation would suffice.

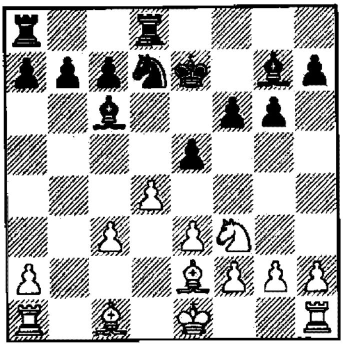
As White I was counting on my usual move 1 d4, against which Mecking normally chose only three or four variations.

This plan worked one hundred and twenty per cent, so to speak. At times the effects of the opening surprises on Mecking were like bomb explosions. He clearly lost his self-control, and made endless protests; for instance, regarding the fact that my pieces stood two millimetres closer to one edge of the square than the other.

The result was that in several games I already had a won position from the opening, and what let me down was only my own haste in the opponent's constant time trouble. This lack of time so exhausted Mecking, that our difference in age was nullified. Moreover, after the match Mecking looked more tired than I did.

This is what can result from accurate opening preparation prior to a match. And here is the evidence.

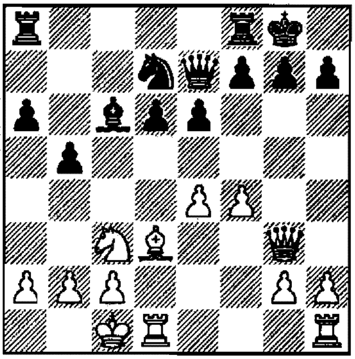
Polugayevsky-Mecking



This is the position after Black's 14th move in the 7th game of the match. It is clear that White has a marked positional advantage. It was achieved in a paradoxical manner: out of his 14 moves, White has made 6(!!) with his queen. What's more, this manoeuvre was of course prepared beforehand.

Another example:

Mecking-Polugayevsky



Here, in the 6th game (a Sicilian Defence), White played 15 f5, and... offered a draw, since he has essentially lost the opening battle. Black, naturally, declined.

The game continued 15...b4 16 ♘e2 ♘c5 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 ♕e3 ♕a7!, and after 18 moves White's position can be assessed as lost.

The win of the queen by 19...♘b3+ is threatened, and so White is forced to allow the black rook in at f2.

In the game there followed 19 ♔b1 ♘xd3 20 ♕xa7 (totally bad is 20 ♕xd3 ♗b5 21 ♕d2 ♖f2) 20...♖xa7 21 cxd3 ♖f2, and to this day I am at a loss to explain how I failed to win such a position.

The deciding game proved to be the final one, the twelfth. I give it here with comments by the late ex-World Champion Mikhail Tal.

Mecking-Polugayevsky
Candidates Quarter-Final, Lucerne 1977
English Opening

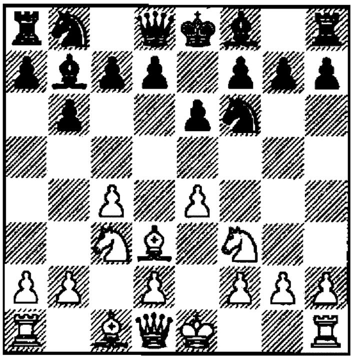
1 c4!

The exclamation mark appears here 'on the rebound'. It is addressed to the move 1...c5. As a long-time devotee of the Sicilian, it is pleasant for me to ascertain that this opening underwent a new and successful testing in this match. The Sicilian Defence passed its exam 'with flying colours', and in the final game of the match White declined to continue the discussion.

1 ... ♘f6
2 ♘c3 e6
3 ♘f3 b6
4 e4

Mecking would undoubtedly have studied all his opponent's recent games, and now he 'modifies his programme'.

4 ... ♗b7
5 ♗d3



This move, for all its paradoxical appearance, is not without logic. The d3 square is only a temporary post for the bishop, and later (after d2-d4) it will be 'observing' the kingside. This continuation was first employed by Romanishin against Petrosian in the 1975 USSR Championship, and gained him a spectacular victory. The idea was an appealing one, and a few rounds later

Polugayevsky played it 'on sight', so to speak (and again successfully) against Gulko. At the Interzonal Tournament in Manila, Polugayevsky again turned to 5 ♗d3, and brilliantly defeated Gheorghiu.

Mecking's psychological idea is understandable – the Brazilian grandmaster is, as it were, inviting his opponent to play 'against himself'.

5 ... d6

Black does not object to a cramped Sicilian-type position, otherwise he would have continued 5...d5 (as Gulko played), or 5...c5 (as he himself played against Smejkal at the International Tournament in Yerevan in 1976).

6 ♗c2 c5
7 d4 cxd4
8 ♘xd4 a6
9 b3 ♗e7
10 0-0 0-0
11 ♗b2 ♘c6
12 ♔h1

This move was made in the earlier games by both Romanishin and Polugayevsky. The idea of it is obvious – White evacuates his king, so as to prepare in time the advance of his f-pawn (the immediate 12 f4 provokes the typical reaction 12...♘xd4 13 ♕xd4 d5). The alternative, which to me seems quite good, is 12 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 13 ♕e2.

12 ... ♕d7

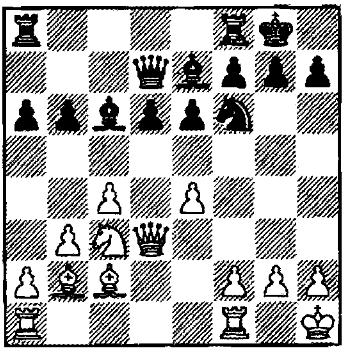
But this is a new continuation. 12...♕c7 and 12...♕b8 were the moves played earlier. Igor Zaitsev has recommended an interesting pawn sacrifice: 12...b5 13 cxb5 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 axb5 15 ♘xb5 e5 16 ♕e3 d5, but clearly Polugayevsky did not wish to part with material in the final game. He intends to carry out ...b6-b5 'free of charge'.

13 ♘xc6

After this exchange the idea of White's previous move becomes not altogether clear – after all, in the present situation his king could equally well be at g1. I think that Mecking was pinning great hopes on his next move.

13 ... ♗xc6
14 ♕d3

Threatening the highly unpleasant 15 ♘d5, with marked positional gains. But Black finds a very interesting counter.



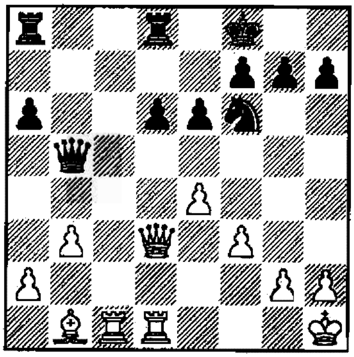
14 ... b5!

By tactical means Black prevents the knight move: 15 ♘d5 fails to 15...exd5 16 exd5 bxc4! 17 bxc4 ♗a4.

15 cxb5 ♗xb5
16 ♘xb5 ♕xb5
17 ♖ac1

Too academic, in my opinion, especially for the last, deciding game of a match, when victory is absolutely necessary. At the age of 25, I at any rate would not have played so quietly. White makes moves which are 'in general' useful, but in the meantime Black consistently carries out a plan to eliminate the opponent's advantage of the two bishops, and to simplify the game. Instead of 17 ♖ac1, 17 ♕d4 deserved consideration, aiming to drive the black queen from b5, and at the same time activate the light-square bishop (♗d3-c4).

17 ... ♖fd8
18 f3 ♘d7!
19 ♗b1 ♗f6
20 ♗xf6 ♘xf6
21 ♖fd1 ♔f8!



There are still many pieces on the board, but the position resembles an endgame. The black king feels comfortable in the centre of the board, since it is impossible for White to open up the game. White's 'attacking' light-square bishop is deep in ambush.

22 ♖c7 ♘e8
23 ♖c3 ♖ac8

White's position still appears preferable, but this does not produce anything definite.

24 ♖dc1 ♖xc3
25 ♕xc3 a5
26 ♗d3 ♕b6
27 ♗f1

White's last hope is to create a passed pawn on the queenside. To this end Mecking switches his bishop (it is essential to control b5), but does not make any particular gains. Black's forces are well mobilised.

27 ... ♔e7
28 g3 ♖d7

Another step in Black's harmonious strategy. The exchange of rooks is to his advantage – as a rule, queen and knight coordinate excellently in endings.

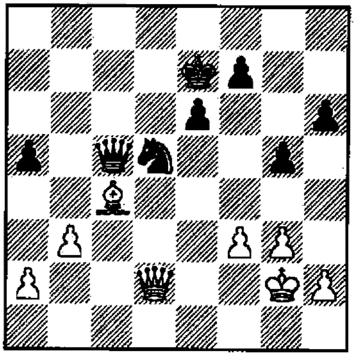
29 ♔g2 ♖c7
30 ♕d2 ♖xc1
31 ♕xc1 ♘f6

Black has no aggressive intentions, but it is impossible to imagine a better arrangement for his pieces.

32 ♗c4 h6
33 ♕d2 ♘d7
34 ♕c3 ♘f6
35 e5

White has no advantage, but he must play on...

35 ... dxe5
36 ♕xe5 g5
37 ♕e1 ♕c5
38 ♕d2 ♘d5!



Played according to the motto: 'a draw from a position of strength'. White cannot tolerate such a knight.

39 ♗xd5 exd5
40 ♔f1 d4
41 ♔e2

Here the game was adjourned. Black has a slight positional advantage, but Polugayevsky is not disposed to try to realise it: the value of the last game is too great, and besides, it had been an extremely tiring match.

41 ... f5
42 ♕d3

On 42 ♔d3 there could have followed 42...♕d5 43 ♕e2+ ♔f6, when no useful move is apparent – on 44 ♕b2 or 44 ♕f2 there follows 44...♕b5+.

42 ... ♔f6
43 ♔d2 f4

Here Mecking offered a **draw**...

What a difficult match this was! A severe struggle in every (literally, every!) game, colossal nervous tension – all this led to the fact that the last few games bore the stamp of fatigue. In looking through this twelfth game, one gains the distinct impression that Mecking attempted to breathe life into the position, but that for this he had left neither energy, nor inspiration. The Soviet grandmaster proved to be better prepared in all aspects: in the openings, and physically.

My Match with Tal, Alma-Ata 1980

After Mikhail Tal's brilliant success at the Interzonal Tournament in Riga, 1979, most experts assessed his chances in the Candidates Match as clearly preferable, especially since in our individual game he had gained a striking victory. And the press, especially the chess press, did not hide its forecasts.

But I, in considering my preparation plan for the match, endeavoured, first of all, not to give in to excessive emotions, but soberly and objectively to weigh up all the facts.

When I played through the ex-World Champion's games from the Riga tournament, I concluded that, despite his brilliant result and rich imagination, in several cases Tal's positions were very dubious, and in some games the Riga grandmaster had gone in for very risky experiments in the opening, as, for example, against me, although it brought him the full point. This factor stimulated me into earnestly preparing for the coming battle, and helped me to maintain belief in my own powers.

I was faced by two serious problems. Firstly, it was important to seize the opening initiative, and secondly, to rest well, in order to have a clear head in the event of any surprises. That is, to avoid a repetition of the Riga story, when at the board I was unable to work out the nuances of the surprise, prepared by Tal.

This detailed self-analysis bore fruit: I enjoyed a great superiority in the match. And it was not just that the point score was 5½-2½ in my favour. I was also very much on top in the purely chess sense. Effectively in not one game of the match did Tal succeed in outplaying me.

It seems to me that the fate of the match was decided not by the last game, as usual, but by the first. My opening preparation and confident play in it so adversely affected the mood of the Riga grandmaster, that right to the end of the contest he was simply unable to find his true form.

This is why I regard this game as 'decisive'.

Polugayevsky-Tal

Candidates Quarter-Final, Alma Ata 1980

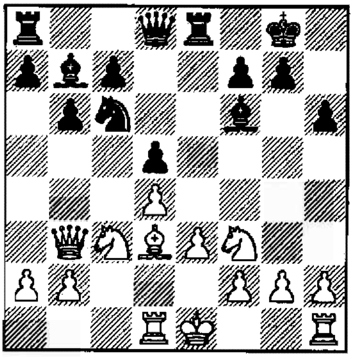
Queen's Gambit Declined

1	**♘f3**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**e6**
3	**♘c3**	**d5**
4	**d4**	**♗e7**
5	**♗g5**	**0-0**
6	**e3**	**h6**
7	**♗h4**	**b6**
8	**♕b3**	

I have several times, and with great success, employed this queen manoeuvre in the Tartakower Variation. Usually in the Queen's Gambit the development of the queen at b3 is not especially advantageous, but in the given set-up it is perfectly logical, since White's main method of play here consists in creating pressure on the central d5 square.

8	**. . .**	**♗b7**
9	**♗xf6**	**♗xf6**
10	**cxd5**	**exd5**
11	**♖d1**	**♖e8**
12	**♗d3**	**♘c6!?**

An idea of Geller's, which Tal had already played previously. Black uses his knight to attack the enemy queen, so as then to make the thematic advance ...c7-c5.



During my preparations I naturally made a serious analysis of this interesting position. As a result, I was able to establish one serious defect in Black's set-up: the poor position of his knight on the edge of the board (after ...♘a5), and also to make precise adjustments to the deployment and coordination of my own pieces.

The course of this game proved so convincing, that later in the match Tal rejected Geller's plan in favour of 12...c5! This energetic strike at the centre is regarded by theory as the strongest counter-measure against White's 8th move. After 13 dxc5 ♘d7! 14 c6 (in the event of 14 cxb6 ♘c5 or first 14...d4 Black has fine play) 14...♗xc6 15 0-0 ♘c5 16 ♕c2 ♖c8 the chances are equal.

13 0-0 ♘a5
14 ♕c2 c5
15 dxc5 bxc5
16 ♘a4! c4
17 ♗e2 ♕c7

Strategically the position looks attractive for White, who has provoked the ...c5-c4 advance and secured for himself the blockading square d4, thus sharply reducing the activity of the bishop at b7.

When defending his views, Geller used to build his play on exploiting the open b-file for a rook, attacking the b2 pawn, and keeping ready in certain cases the ...d5-d4 advance. And usually he was successful in upholding his principles, but only for the reason that White did not find a clear-cut coordinating plan.

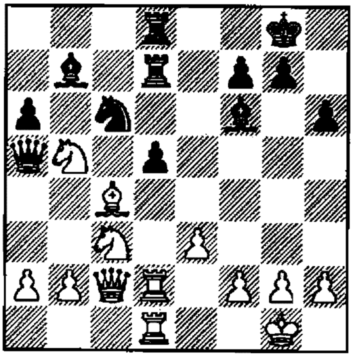
18 ♘c3 ♖ad8
19 ♖d2!

This simple doubling on the d-file diverts Black from any active ideas, forcing him to consider the fate of his own d5 pawn.

19 . . . ♖d7
20 ♖fd1 ♖ed8
21 ♘d4

White plans a set-up that is very unpleasant for Black: ♗f3 and ♘d4-e2-f4. Black should evidently have chosen 21...♕b6, but he hastens to bring his knight into operation, without, however, taking full account of all the consequences.

21 . . . ♘c6?
22 ♘db5 ♕a5
23 ♗xc4 a6



Black was relying on this move, associating it with the variation 24 ♘a3 ♘b4. But with the following tactical blow White gains a serious advantage.

24 ♘xd5! ♖xd5

24...axb5 is of course bad, on account of 25 ♘xf6+ gxf6 26 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 27 ♖xd7 bxc4 (27...♕e1+ 28 ♗f1) 28 h3.

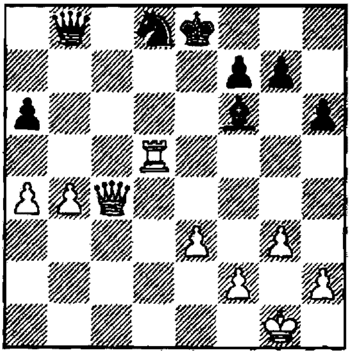
25 ♖xd5 ♖xd5
26 ♗xd5 ♕xb5
27 a4! ♕b6

27...♕xb2 fails to 28 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 29 ♖b1.

28 ♕e4

Threatening 29 ♕e8+. Black is forced to agree to the exchange of light-square bishops, after which White's rook and two pawns, on opposite flanks, are clearly superior to Black's bishop and knight. This advantage is especially appreciable if the queens are exchanged. There then arises a typical ending, one that often occurs in practice, where with the support of his rook White creates two widely separated passed pawns, against which the minor pieces are usually helpless. Therefore Black's only chance of resisting is to retain his main fighting piece.

28 ... ♘d8
29 ♗xb7 ♘xb7
30 b4 ♔f8
31 ♖d7 ♘d8
32 g3 ♕b8
33 ♕c4 ♔e8
34 ♖d5



White has completed the required preparations for a pawn breakthrough on the queenside, which Black is unable to prevent.

34 ... ♕b7
35 b5

Not the best way of carrying out the plan. First 35 a5! and only then 36 b5 was undoubtedly stronger, when it is doubtful whether Black could have held out for long. For example: 35...♘c6 36 b5! ♘xa5 (36...♘e5 37 ♕e4) 37 ♕e4+ ♔f8 38 bxa6 ♕xa6 39 ♕b4+, or 37...♗e7 38 bxa6 ♕xa6 39 ♕a4+. When making my 35th move, I overlooked that Black was not obliged to exchange on b5.

35 ... a5!
36 h4 ♗e7
37 ♖d1 ♘e6
38 ♕c3 ♗b4

Black, in severe time trouble, fails to find the best arrangement of his pieces. He should have kept control of b6 by playing 38...♗d8! And although White has a clear advantage, it would not be an easy matter to realise it.

39 ♕e5 ♗e7
40 ♖c1 ♗f6?
41 ♕d6 ♗d8

Now too late, since the white queen has penetrated into the enemy position, and the game concludes immediately.

42 ♕a6!

Black resigns, since he cannot stop the b-pawn.

In this match Misha Tal was in far from his best form, but, despite his defeat, he held on courageously, demonstrating great dignity. I am happy that for many years my chess career was closely linked with this unusually charming man, this great chess magician, whom we all called a genius even when he was still alive.

The chess world has been impoverished by the loss of Misha Tal, but he has left us a countless number of brilliant masterpieces.

My Match with Korchnoi
Buenos Aires 1980

In my career Viktor Korchnoi has been one of my most difficult opponents in the psychological sense. It is hard to give an exact explanation of this; probably there is not just one, but several reasons. In my first match with him (Evian 1977) there was essentially no battle, Korchnoi dominating completely at the chessboard.

When preparing for my second match with him – this was in the Candidates Semi-Finals – I engaged in self-reproach: 'Why and for what reason does this happen with me?' Day after day, step by step, I was occupied with 'understanding myself'. I will not burden the reader with how this character 'polishing process' proceeded. I can only say with conviction that I arrived in Argentina a completely different person, and that of the 'old Polugayevsky' not a trace remained.

Therefore this second match with Korchnoi turned out to be unusually tense and interesting, and in the creative sense too it was at a quite high level. This was an equal clash between two opponents worthy of each other.

The Buenos Aires event was conducted at the very highest level and surpassed all expectations. Many complimentary words can be addressed to the match organisers, to its chief arbiter, the 'eternally youthful' Argentine grandmaster Miguel Najdorf, and to one of the sponsors, the *Clarin* newspaper.

In those days the Argentine capital enjoyed a genuine chess boom, as thousands of spectators constantly filled one of its central theatres, observing the course of the match.

But the greatest revelation of the event was the erection on the stage of... a glass chamber, in which the grandmasters joined battle. Constructed according to the design of an Argentine architect, in the opinion of the organisers it was designed to completely protect the participants against... bullets, parapsychologists, and the noise of chess fans. It is not everyone, of course, who would like being isolated from the auditorium, and not to feel its breathing. But on the other hand, it is hard to imagine more ideal conditions for the absolute mobilisation of one's thoughts.

To this day I regret that this 'Argentine innovation' has been forgotten, and has not been taken up by the chess world.

Over a period of six weeks there was a very tough battle, with the grandmasters playing all twelve games of normal time plus two additional games. Although, in my opinion, in the second half of the match I even had a slight playing advantage, the score before the concluding twelfth game was 6-5 in Korchnoi's favour.

But the opening preparation for this 'decisive' game I began after the conclusion of the tenth game, since I planned the following schedule: to gain a draw as Black in the eleventh game, and transfer the resolving of the main question to the last day, when I would have the white pieces.

From what has been said earlier, it will be clearly evident how incredibly difficult it is to win to order 'the game of one's life', and how much spiritual strength is required for this.

In order somehow to surprise my opponent, it was exceptionally important for me to find some fresh idea in the Queen's Indian Defence, which had been regularly tested in our event.

I realised that at this critical moment I needed absolute solitude for a direct, open discussion 'with myself', and that, for total concentration of thoughts, I had to rid myself of the slightest extraneous influence. And for the first time in the match I did some night-time analytical work without my trainers, so as first to find an idea, and only then consult with my assistants!

Passionately I began searching for that 'one' move for the given situation. My attention was focused on a rare variation of the Queen's Indian Defence, which, it is true, I had already employed twice in the match, although without the desired result.

Painstakingly studying the position, I attempted to approach the problem from the other side, and... on the eighth move a great success awaited me.

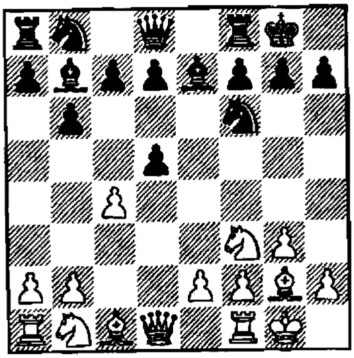
Later, for several years, my innovation served White faithfully in many tournaments. I think that World Champion Garry Kasparov can thank me for this invention: he has employed it several times and with enormous success. It took Black many years to find an adequate antidote.

Polugayevsky-Korchnoi

Candidates Semi-Final, Buenos Aires 1980

Queen's Indian Defence

1	**♘f3**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**b6**
3	**g3**	**e6**
4	**♗g2**	**♗b7**
5	**0-0**	**♗e7**
6	**d4**	**0-0**
7	**d5**	**exd5**



The eighth game of the match had gone 8 ♘d4 ♗c6! (after 8...♘c6 9 cxd5 ♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 c5 11 ♕d3!? d6 12 a4 a6 13 ♘a3 b5 14 ♗f4 b4 15 ♘c4 White gained a slight advantage in the sixth game) 9 cxd5 ♗xd5 10 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 11 e4 ♘b4 12 ♘c3 ♗f6 13 ♘f5 ♖e8!, and Black has good chances thanks to his pressure on e4.

8 ♘h4!!

It is this lateral knight manoeuvre that proves the 'crux' of White's idea. In this way he attains the desired variations, while avoiding 8...♗c6 and 8...♘c6.

8 ... c6

After 8...♘e4 9 cxd5 ♗xh4 10 ♗xe4 ♗f6 11 ♕c2 g6 12 ♘c3 White obtains an attractive position.

9 cxd5 ♘xd5

10 ♘f5

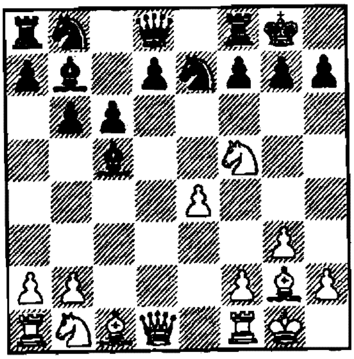
This position had frequently occurred in the 8 ♘d4 c6 variation, although there White usually continued 10 e4 followed by 11 ♘c3. But here the vulnerable position of the white knight dictates that it should immediately move to f5. Black decides to try and cast doubts on this.

10 ... ♗c5

Vacating e7 for the knight, from where it will dislodge its white opponent from its active position. As will be seen, White is able to refute this plan.

Later at the Malta Olympiad, two other continuations were tried. But after both 10...♘c7 11 e4 d5 12 ♘c3 ♗f6 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♗f4 ♘ba6 15 ♖e1 (Kasparov-Marjanovic), and 10...♘f6 11 e4 d5 12 ♘c3 dxe4 13 ♘xe4 with the threat of ♗g5 (Polugayevsky-Stean went 13 ♗g5?! h6, when Black parried the attack) White has a serious initiative for the pawn.

11 e4 ♘e7



12 ♘xg7! ♔xg7
13 b4

White regains his piece, and the opponent's dark squares on the kingside are irreparably weakened.

13 ... ♗xb4

Black should probably have tried 13...♗a6, so that after 14 ♖e1 the white rook would have been less actively placed than in the game. But here too White has a strong initiative, e.g. 14...♗xb4 15 ♕d4+ f6 16 ♕xb4 c5 17 ♕c3 ♘bc6 18 e5!

14 ♕d4+ f6
15 ♕xb4 c5
16 ♕d2 ♘bc6
17 ♗b2

The check at h6 is unnecessary, since there is no point in driving the black king out of the firing line. White's overall plan consists in organising the e4-e5 breakthrough, after which it will all be over. Realising this, Black tries by tactical means to hinder or at least delay it.

17 ... ♗a6
18 ♖d1 ♘e5
19 ♘a3

White is not afraid of this sideways development, since the knight and the black bishop mutually restrict each other. Meanwhile, the threat of f2-f4 hangs over Black like the sword of Damocles.

19 ... ♘7c6
20 ♕e3!

This modest move, over which I thought for more than half an hour, prevents Black from confusing matters in variations such as 20 f4 ♘d3 21 e5 ♘xb2 22 ♕xb2 ♘d4 23 ♗xa8 ♕xa8, and thus acts like a proverbial cold shower.

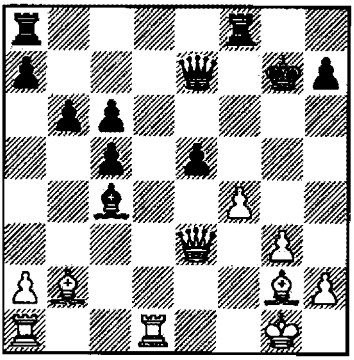
20 ... ♕e7

On 20...♘b4 White had prepared the murderous 21 ♖d6!, with the threat of ♖ad1, and after 21...♘bd3 (21...♘ed3 loses immediately to 22 ♕g5+) 22 f4 ♘xb2 (or 22...♘g4 23 ♕f3) 23 fxe5 Black is lost.

21 f4 ♘c4

Of course, there was little cheer in retreating to f7 or g6, but nevertheless this would have been the lesser evil.

22 ♘xc4 ♗xc4
23 e5 fxe5
24 ♗xc6 dxc6



25 ♖d7!!

An explosive move. With his few remaining forces White begins a direct attack, which is merely strengthened by the presence of opposite-colour bishops.

25 ... ♕xd7
26 ♕xe5+ ♔f7

Correct was 26...♔g6, which would have transposed into the game after 27 ♕g5+ ♔f7 28 ♕f6+. But now White could have won more quickly by 27 ♖e1 ♕e6 (27...♕g4 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 ♕h8+ ♔f7 30 ♕xh7+ and mate next move, or 27...♗e6 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 ♕g5+ ♔f7 30 f5 and wins) 28 ♕c7+ ♔e8 29 ♕xc6+, winning an important pawn in comparison with the game.

But I had worked out beforehand the variations after 26...♔g6, and with time trouble approaching I did not want to be diverted by a search for additional possibilities.

27 ♕f6+ ♔g8
28 ♕g5+ ♔f7
29 ♖e1 ♕e6

Black has to give up his queen, since 29...♗e6 fails to 30 f5.

30 ♕g7+ ♔e8
31 ♖xe6+ ♗xe6
32 ♗f6 ♗f7
33 ♗g5

The end position of White's combination. Of course, 34 ♕xh7 followed by the advance of the pawns would also have won, but, by threatening 34 ♕e5+, for the sake of comfort he intends in addition to win the exchange.

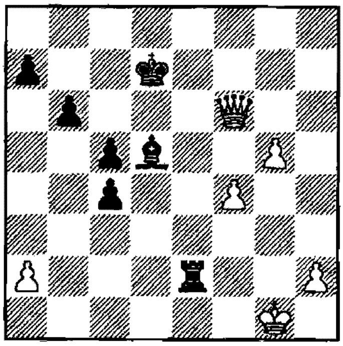
33 ... ♔d7
34 ♗h6 c4
35 ♕xh7 c5
36 ♗xf8

There was absolutely no reason to be in a hurry with this; 36 g4 or 36 h4 would have concluded matters within a few moves. I was let down by my nerves in this important game, the last in 'normal time'.

36 ... ♖xf8
37 ♕g7 ♔e7
38 ♕e5+ ♔d7
39 g4

And here White should have restricted the rook by 39 ♕f6, or advanced the pawn after the preparatory 39 ♕g7 ♔e7.

39 ... ♖e8
40 ♕f6 ♗d5
41 g5 ♖e2



In this position the game was adjourned. Black has activated his pieces, but a queen is a queen, and there are two ways to win: by the move sealed by White, and by 42 g6. Moreover, in my analysis I was able to find a fairly clear-cut winning procedure.

42 h4 b5

Obviously 42...♖xa2 loses quickly to 43 h5. Therefore Black attempts to advance his pawn to b4 and follow it up with ...c4-c3 or ...b4-b3. By a series of checks White forestalls this possibility.

43 ♕f5+ ♔d6
44 ♕f8+ ♔c6
45 ♕c8+ ♔d6
46 ♕d8+ ♔c6
47 ♕a8+ ♔d6
48 ♕f8+

Having made several 'prophylactic anti-time trouble' moves, White sets about implementing his plan.

48 ... ♔c6
49 a3!

The black pawns are now halted, since 49...a5 is met by 50 ♕a8+ and 51 ♕xa5, and 49...c3 by 50 ♕f6+.

49 ... ♖e3

The only chance of exploiting the passed c4 pawn. 49...♖a2 would have been most simply met by 50 ♕f6+ and 51 ♕c3, followed by the advance of the kingside pawns.

50 h5 c3
51 ♕f6+

Again White solves all his problems by checks.

51 ... ♗e6

Or 51...♔c7 52 ♕g7+! ♔c6 (52...♔c8 53 ♕f8+) 53 h6, when 52...c2 loses to 53 ♕g6+.

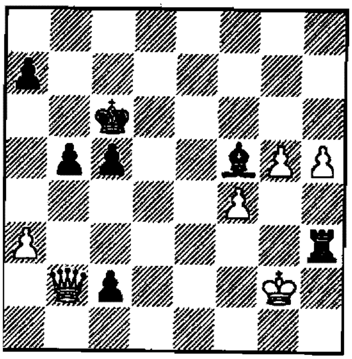
But now too White is able to exploit the fact that the black bishop is not very actively placed.

52 ♔f2 c2
53 ♕b2 ♖h3
54 ♔g2

Completing the encirclement: after 54...♖xh5 55 ♕xc2 the white pawns are unstoppable.

54 ... ♗f5

The last chance.



55 ♕f6+!

White simply transposes into a won queen ending, his pawns being further advanced.

55 ... ♔c7
56 ♕xf5 c1=♕
57 ♕e5+

Vacating f5 for the king. The rest is obvious.

57...♔b6 58 ♔xh3 b4 59 axb4 cxb4 60 h6 ♕h1+ 61 ♔g4 ♕d1+ 62 ♔f5 ♕c2+ 63 ♔f6 b3 64 h7! ♕xh7 65 ♕e3+ ♔c6 66 ♕xb3 ♕h8+ 67 ♔e7 ♕h4 68 ♕c4+ ♔b6 69 ♕b4+ ♔c6 70 ♕e4+ ♔b5 71 ♔f7 a5 72 g6 ♕g4 73 ♕e5+ Black resigns

The match score was levelled at 6-6. By the rules of the competition we had to play two additional games, and if they did not decide anything, then another two. And if even after this the scores were still level, the following approved clause was to come into force: the winner would be the player who had won more games with the black pieces. A more ridiculous decision is hard to imagine!

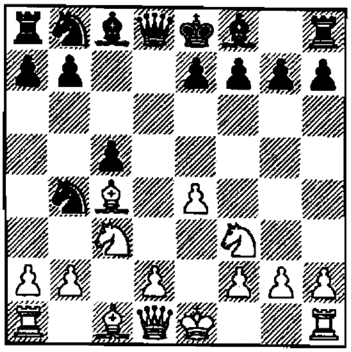
Incidentally, before the start of this World Championship cycle, the FIDE President Fridrik Olafsson invited all the Candidates to Amsterdam, in order to discuss this clause, and the majority of the participants voted for the abolition of this absurd rule. I do not know why the President did not immediately draw up an appropriate document, but when later this question was again put to the participants, one of the Candidates Quarter-Final Matches had already started. As a result time was lost, and everything remained unchanged. This factor was to play a fatal role in my destiny...

Since, on the number of wins with Black, Korchnoi had the advantage over me, in the event of a drawn match I would be out of the battle for the world crown. And so for the second time I had to accomplish a feat: again win a 'decisive' clash during the short distance of the additional games.

After a draw in the thirteenth game came the 14th, where I had White. It turned out to be the last in the tiring six-week battle and became one of the most dramatic pages in my chess biography...

The players chose what was then a topical variation of the English Opening:

1 ♘f3 ♘f6
2 c4 c5
3 ♘c3 d5
4 cxd5 ♘xd5
5 e4 ♘b4
6 ♗c4



This position was well known to me, since I had played this in the afore-mentioned game with Tal in Riga. At a training session with international master Orest

Averkin, we spent many hours on new analysis, and came to the conclusion that White has good prospects.

And yet, before making my sixth move, I hesitated: I was put on my guard by the speed with which Korchnoi had played the opening. The thought even occurred to me: "Why not play 6 ♗b5+, where White guarantees himself at least equal chances, and only at home decide whether to choose the main line in the concluding 'white' game No.16?"

In any other situation, where I was not afraid of a draw, I would probably have done this. But had I the right to agree to this, and to leave myself essentially only one chance on the last day, when an opportunity had presented itself to 'engage in battle' right from the opening? Besides, what if in the 16th game my opponent were to 'change course'?

And so my doubts were banished:

6 ♗c4!?? ♘d3+

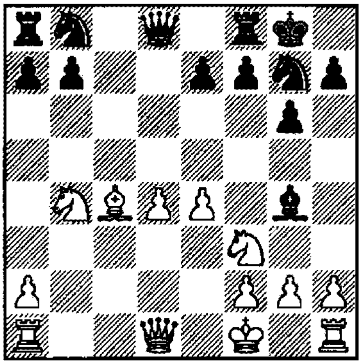
The main continuation, around which the debates were proceeding, was considered to be 6...♗e6 7 ♗xe6 ♘d3+ 8 ♔f1 fxe6.

7 ♔e2 ♘f4+
8 ♔f1 ♘e6
9 b4 cxb4
10 ♘d5 g6
11 ♗b2 ♗g7
12 ♗xg7 ♘xg7
13 ♘xb4

Later, ways were found for White to keep the initiative, in particular 13 ♕c1!? ♘c6 14 d4).

13 ... 0-0
14 d4 ♗g4

Korchnoi made these moves at almost lightning speed, and I realised that I had clearly fallen into a trap... After the game I was told how Averkin, observing the opening events on a TV screen in the auditorium, had put his head in his hands, being on the verge of 'insanity'.



Late that evening the 'terrible' truth was revealed to me. It turned out that the diagram position had occurred in the other Semi-Final Match between Hübner and Portisch, which was taking place at that time in Europe, and had been published in the *Clarin* newspaper. And of course, Korchnoi had not been slow to make use of this interesting idea.

The Danish grandmaster Bent Larsen later wrote: 'Polu... lost the match, because he had not read the *Clarin* newspaper.'

Dear Bent, you are right only partially. In fact I constantly looked at all the chess news in the *Clarin*, and by agreement in my training group a special procedure was even established: every morning before breakfast, I was brought that page of the paper where our games, and also those of the Hübner-Portisch match, were annotated.

But on that ill-starred morning, the day before the decisive battle, I was absorbed in the analysis of the 13th game, and that precious page from the *Clarin*, with the diagram mentioned, for some reason did not come within my field of view.

But this was only half the trouble. The main 'nightmare' was that that same day Miguel Najdorf had shown the Hübner-Portisch game to my trainers Averkin and Sveshnikov, but they had simply forgotten to inform me...

Such a tragic combination of circumstances is enough to drive a man mad!

Below I give the remainder of the game with very light notes. I hope that the reader will excuse me, since even now it is 'torture' for me to remember what happened...

From the diagram position the game continued:

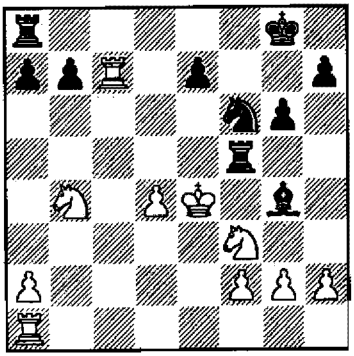
15 ♔e2?!

Hübner played 15 ♕d2, but after 15...♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘c6 17 ♘xc6 bxc6 he was still in difficulties. Probably the best for White was 15 d5.

15 ... ♕d6!
16 ♕d2 ♘e6
17 ♗xe6 ♕xe6
18 ♔e3

After 18 ♕d3 Black would have had the unpleasant 18...f5! 19 e5 a5 20 ♘c2 ♘c6 and 21...♖ad8.

18 ... f5
19 ♕d3 fxe4
20 ♕xe4 ♕xe4+
21 ♔xe4 ♘d7
22 ♖hc1 ♖f5!
23 ♖c7 ♘f6+



Despite the exchange of queens, Black has a strong attack thanks to the white king's sorry position in the centre of the board.

Korchnoi conducted the final part of the game very strongly.

24 ♔d3 a5 25 ♘c2 ♘d5 26 ♖xb7 ♘f4+ 27 ♔e4 ♘xg2 28 ♘e5 ♖f4+ 29 ♔d5 ♗f5! 30 ♖c7 ♖d8+ 31 ♔c5 ♗xc2 32 ♘c6 ♖e8 33 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 34 ♘c6 ♖f5+ 35 ♘e5 ♘f4 36 ♖xh7 ♔g8 37 ♖d7 ♘d3+ 38 ♔b6 ♘xe5 39 dxe5 ♖exe5 40 ♖c1 ♖f6+ 41 ♔a7 ♖xf2 White resigns

MEETINGS WITH WORLD CHAMPIONS

Of course, all these can be regarded as decisive games, as 'games of one's life'. Because Champions – even if they have already lost their title, or have not yet gained it – are extraordinary chess players. And people too. This is natural: otherwise they would not be Champions...

My games with all the World Champions with whom fate has linked me have normally resulted in a very hard fight. Whether this was because I intuitively sensed their special chess strength, or for some other reason, it is difficult to say. But on many occasions these games have served as stimulants for me, they have left their mark, and have changed me as a player, as a fighter, and as a person. Even when their competitive significance has been slight, or simply non-existent. In these meetings I have tested myself, and at times convinced myself that I might be able to achieve something in chess...

These games are also included in this book for another reason. In each of them there was a crucial opening battle, which was important at the time, and in which both players tried to vindicate their own convictions. And the preparation carried out prior to each game was very thorough. Ideas were born, either to be shortly refuted, or to become part of theory.

I give these games not in chronological order, but in the order in which my opponents became World Champion.

DON'T CREATE AN IDOL FOR YOURSELF

Botvinnik-Polugayevsky
Moscow 1967
English Opening

To be honest, by that time I had already even given up hope of a meeting at the board with the Patriarch of Soviet chess, the strongest World Champion over a period of many years after the Second World War. The ex-World Champion was then already 56 years old, and it was said that he would shortly be ending his chess career. But we were brought together by the team event of the USSR Peoples' Spartakiad. As the reader will see, I lost this game. And now I am convinced, knowing myself, that it could not have been otherwise. Since my childhood, Mikhail Botvinnik had been my idol, and virtually the first game which I studied really thoroughly was his brilliant win over Lilienthal in the 1944 USSR Championship. I was so thrilled by it that for the first time in my life, instead of going to school, I went off to the town park, and there, on a bench, I re-enacted the game probably some seventy times on my board.

From then on I lived under the spell of Botvinnik's play. A book of his selected games lay under my pillow. I always supported him, even when I had become a grandmaster, and I treasured his advice. Even the present book, as you will recall, owes its existence to Professor Botvinnik. At that time in Belgrade, in 1969, we played together in a tournament for the second and last time, and this was essentially the tournament that concluded Botvinnik's competitive career. But rather than the draw which occurred there, I should nevertheless like to give our first game.

When I was preparing for the game, I realised that my main trump in playing against the ex-World Champion was my far-seeing calculation in dynamic positions, and so I decided to employ an idea which had occurred in a game of mine against Tringov in some international tournament. Purely chess-wise the scheme fully justified itself, but... I did not succeed, even for five hours, in renouncing my admiration for Botvinnik; indeed, at the time it was probably impossible for me to do so.

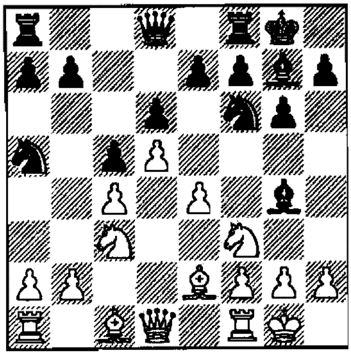
On the other hand, the game taught me to overcome myself, and although I lost the game, I gained considerably more. I realised that in the battle for the highest titles (and within six months I became USSR Champion for the first time) I had to become tougher, I had to learn to play without regard for reputations, and I had to act with determination, which was what I lacked in my first encounter with Mikhail Botvinnik.

1	**c4**	**c5**
2	**♘f3**	**♘c6**
3	**♘c3**	**g6**
4	**e3**	**♗g7**
5	**d4**	**d6**
6	**♗e2**	**♘f6**
7	**d5**	**♘a5**

That Botvinnik would choose this particular system of development, I had not the slightest doubt, and I had studied this position in my preparations. It is similar to a King's Indian set-up, with the difference that the white bishop is not at g2, but e2, from where it defends the c4 pawn and hinders ...b7-b5. On the other hand, White's pawn has not yet advanced to e4, and this gives Black some time for development. And without e3-e4 White cannot get by.

8	**e4**	**0-0**
9	**0-0**	**♗g4!**

It turns out that the c4 pawn still requires defending! It is this move that constitutes Tringov's idea. But here my opponent replied surprisingly quickly.



10 ♗e3

I had reckoned only with 10 ♘d2 ♗xe2 11 ♕xe2 ♘d7, but Botvinnik upholds one of his own principles: for the sake of reinforcing his centre, White is prepared to spoil his pawn formation.

10 ... ♗xf3
11 gxf3 e5

Nowadays I would probably have played 11...e6, since after 12...exd5 13 cxd5 ♖e8 the white centre, although strong, is immobile. With the move in the game I wanted to make the game more closed: after all, the opponent has two bishops.

12 f4 exf4
13 ♗xf4 ♕e7

13...♖e8 suggests itself, so as on 14 ♗d3 to reply 14...♘h5, and in comparison with the game the black queen can go to h4 without loss of time. I didn't like 13...♖e8 because of 14 ♕c2, but in this case White is deprived of the manoeuvre ♗d3-b1, which he carries out in the game.

14 ♗d3 ♘d7?

Of course, Black should have played 14...♘h5 15 ♗e3 a6 (15...♕h4 is premature in view of the possibility in certain variations – after 16 f4 – of the knight moving to b5) 16 ♖c1 ♕h4 17 f4 ♖ae8 18 ♕f3 f5, with an active position. But psychologically I was not prepared for gaining a good game against 'the' Botvinnik so quickly, and so I played timidly, aiming merely to post my knight at e5.

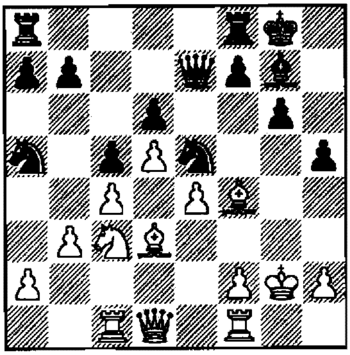
15 ♖c1 ♘e5
16 b3

White is not especially sorry to give up his bishop at d3, since his main trump lies in the inactivity of the black knight at a5. Exchanges merely increase White's advantage in force on the kingside and in the centre.

16 ... h5

With the idea of 17...♕h4 18 ♗g3 ♕h3, when 19...h4 is threatened. But this move creates nothing but additional weaknesses. It is understandable that I should not want to exchange, but 16...g5! deserved consideration, and if 17 ♗e3 g4!, with a double-edged game, while 17 ♗g3 ♘g6 gives Black control of the dark squares on the kingside.

17 ♔g2!



A subtle move, which I had overlooked in my calculations. The white king defends itself 'à la Steinitz'. Black is deprived of the h3 square, and the futility of his previous move becomes apparent.

17 ... a6

White's plan is close to fulfilment – ♗b1, ♗e3 and f2-f4. Probably I should have sacrificed a pawn by 17...g5 18 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♕xh5 ♔g7, with counterplay, but again I was hindered by timidity in front of my idol.

18 ♗b1 ♖ab8
19 ♕e2 ♕d7

Black pins his hopes on the ...b7-b5 advance, but the opponent's very next move comes as a cold shower.

20 ♗d2

The knight at a5 is immediately left hanging.

20 ... b5
21 ♘d1

Not, of course, 21 ♘xb5? axb5 22 ♗xa5 b4, when the white bishop at a5 is lost.

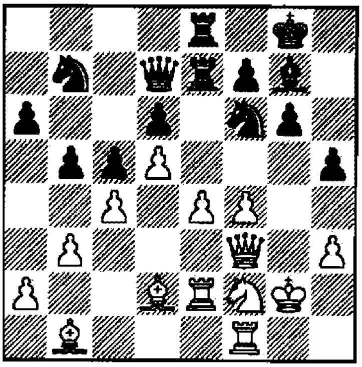
21 ... ♘b7
22 f4

It is obvious that the opening battle has been won by White, although after his risky 10th move he might well have lost it.

22 ... ♘g4

The exchange of queens – 22...♕g4+, leaves Black with a difficult ending.

23 h3 ♘f6
24 ♘f2 ♖be8
25 ♖ce1 ♖e7
26 ♕f3 ♖fe8
27 ♖e2!



The battle is 'for' and 'against' the e4-e5 breakthrough, in which it is clear that White holds the upper hand.

27 ... ♘h7

27...bxc4 28 bxc4 ♕a4 does nothing to solve Black's problems, and can be well met by 29 ♕b3 or 29 ♗d3.

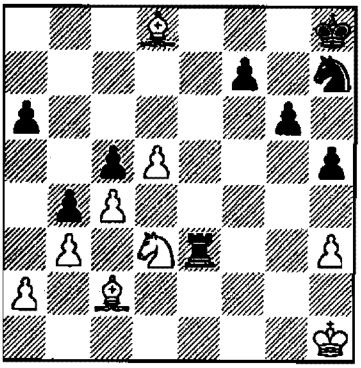
28 ♖fe1 ♗d4
29 ♗c2

White has no reason to hurry, and he even deprives his opponent of the possibility just mentioned.

29 ... b4
30 ♔h2 ♘d8
31 ♘d3 ♔h8
32 e5 ♕c7
33 ♔h1 dxe5
34 fxe5 ♗xe5
35 ♖xe5

Simpler was 35 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 36 ♕g3, when it is doubtful whether Black has anything better than 36...♖xe2 37 ♕xc7 ♖xe1+ 38 ♗xe1 ♖xe1+ 39 ♔g2 ♖e2+ 40 ♔f3, which is clearly lost for him.

35 ... ♖xe5
36 ♖xe5 ♖xe5
37 ♗f4 ♖f5
38 ♗xc7 ♖xf3
39 ♗xd8 ♖e3



Capturing on h3 gives White a tempo for the approach of his king, while 39...♖f1+ 40 ♔g2 ♖a1 41 ♔f2 ♖xa2 42 ♘e1 leaves the rook out of play. But perhaps it was here that Black should have sought his last chance, in the variation 42...a5 43 ♔f1 a4 44 bxa4 ♖b2. True, it is not difficult to find 45 ♗c7 f6 46 ♗f4, with the threat of 47 ♗c1. Now White realises his advantage by accurate technique.

40 ♔g1 ♖e2 41 ♗d1 ♖d2 42 ♘f2 ♘f8 43 ♔f1 ♘d7 44 ♗g5 ♖xa2 45 ♘d3 ♔g7 46 ♗e7 ♖a5 47 h4 f6 48 ♔e1 ♔f7 49 ♗d6 ♔g7 (Black is in *zugzwang*!) **50 ♘b2 ♖a1 51 ♘a4 ♘e5 52 ♗xe5 fxe5 53 ♘xc5 a5 54 ♔d2 ♖a2+ 55 ♔e3 Black resigns**

IT IS BETTER PLAYING WHITE

Polugayevsky-Smyslov

44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976
Queen's Indian Defence

For many long years I used to meet Vasily Smyslov in various sorts of events, large and small, but I simply could not win against him. And meanwhile I suffered several defeats. The reason for this – which I recognised – was a certain similarity of style, and a liking for the same types of positions, but nevertheless the main cause lay in me myself. When sitting down at the board against the ex-World Champion, I would never scent victory, and was unable to force myself to cross some internal barrier.

I was helped, strange though it may sound, by my team colleagues. The Lokomotiv Sports Society, of which I was a member, was playing in the USSR Team Championship in Rostov-on-Don. In team events every game can be considered a decisive one, since you are playing not for yourself, but for your colleagues.

With the aid of such a 'stimulant', for the first time I completely outplayed Smyslov, after obtaining an absolutely overwhelming position. The psychological barrier collapsed, and the number of my wins against this splendid player began to grow, and not only in team events, but also in individual tournaments. What's more, I was no longer afraid of Smyslov even in the endgame, in that very field where for many years he was considered the strongest in the world.

True, as will shortly be seen, in the present game things essentially did not get as far as an ending. On the other hand, this game has a curious 'foreword' and 'postscript'.

The point is that this opening variation, which transposes practically by force into a completely definite middlegame position, occurred in my games four times within a short space of time. And what is really surprising is the fact that twice I was playing White, and twice Black! And against pretty serious opposition: three former World Champions and one Candidate for the chess throne...

Jumping ahead, I can state that all these games enabled a definite assessment to be made regarding the resulting position: it is in White's favour.

All this began with my game against Lajos Portisch in the tournament at Budapest in 1975. The game was played in the penultimate round; I was leading, and it was sufficient for me to avoid losing as Black.

Exchanges occurred on the board, and a draw seemed more and more likely. But... suddenly I realised that things were bad for me, and that I had stumbled into a system that had been accurately worked out by Portisch at home. And that Black's position might not be able to withstand the systematically mounting pressure...

I nevertheless managed to draw, but I myself took up 'Portisch's patent', although true, after thoroughly studying it.

The tournament in Budapest was not a particularly important one. The game did not receive wide coverage in the press, and was not taken up by theory. And a year later, in the Interzonal Tournament at Manila, Boris Spassky somehow very calmly went in for this variation against me, without the slightest suspicion of my sufferings in the game with Portisch. Boris survived by a miracle – on the last move before the time control I blundered.

Strangely enough, even after Manila no one pondered over the dangers awaiting Black in the initial position of this variation. It seemed too simple, and allowed too many exchanges. Besides, grandmasters remembered the game Capablanca-Botvinnik, Nottingham 1936, where Black had even gained a slight advantage.

The first to sense the danger was Mikhail Tal. Playing against Portisch in the Match-Tournament of three grandmasters in Varese in the same year, 1976, he suddenly remembered my game with Spassky, and deviated just in time. But even so, he gained a draw only with some help from his opponent.

And now – the USSR Championship, and my game with Smyslov.

1	**♘f3**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**b6**
3	**g3**	**c5**
4	**♗g2**	**♗b7**
5	**0-0**	**g6**

It is well known that after 5...e6 6 d4 the position is considered favourable for White.

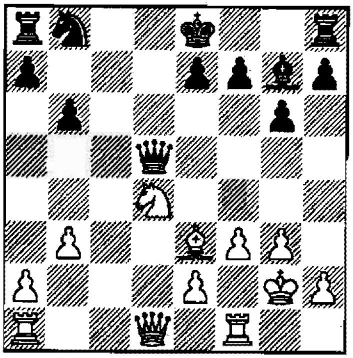
6	**♘c3**	**♗g7**
7	**d4**	**cxd4**
8	**♘xd4**	**♗xg2**
9	**♔xg2**	**♕c8**

In the well-known game Botvinnik-Lilienthal, Moscow 1936, which received the first brilliancy prize, Black played inaccurately – 9...0-0, and after 10 e4! ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♕c8 (as Botvinnik remarks, Black gains no relief by 11...♘g4 12 ♕xg4 ♘xd4 13 ♖ad1 etc.) 12 b3 ♕b7 13 f3 ♖fd8 14 ♖c1 ♖ac8 15 ♕d2 White gained complete control of the centre, and a significant advantage.

10	**b3**	**♕b7+**
11	**f3**	**d5**

In the Portisch-Tal game mentioned earlier, Black avoided this advance, and played 11...♘c6. There followed 12 ♗b2 0-0 13 e4 ♖ac8 14 ♕d2 a6 15 ♖ac1 ♖fd8 16 ♖fd1 ♘xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♘e8 18 ♕d2 b5 19 cxb5 axb5 20 ♘d5 ♖xc1, and if White had continued 21 ♕xc1, then, according to Tal, he would have had a clear advantage.

12	**cxd5**	**♘xd5**
13	**♘xd5**	**♕xd5**
14	**♗e3!**	



Portisch's innovation, which he first employed against me. The game Capablanca-Botvinnik, to which I have already referred, went 14 ♗b2?! 0-0 15 ♕d3 ♖d8 16 ♖fd1 ♘d7 17 ♖ac1 ♘c5 18 ♕b1 ♕b7 19 ♘c2 (19 ♘b5? is bad in view of 19...♕a6!) 19... ♕a6, and Black's position was preferable.

What is the point of Portisch's innovation? It involves a completely different plan! White condemns the bishop at g7 to 'shooting' into thin air, whereas the bishop at e3 has a quite specific target: the pawns at b6 and a7. In addition, after 14 ♗e3 White is the first to seize the open files in the centre, and this is also important.

14	**...**	**♘c6?!**

Even without this Black is rather behind in development, but now he allows his opponent to gain a further tempo. It is true that another pair of minor pieces disappears, but this in no way eases Black's position. Therefore a different development of the knight deserves consideration, e.g. 14...0-0 15 ♖c1, and now:

(a) 15...♘d7 (the weaker alternative) 16 ♖c7 ♖fc8 (or 16...♕e5 17 ♖xd7 ♕xe3 18 ♘c6, and White wins a pawn) 17 ♘c6! ♕e6 (Black also loses material after 17...♕xd1 18 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 19 ♖xd1 ♖xc6 20 ♖xd7, since 20...♖c2?? fails to 21 ♖d8+ and 22 ♗h6, mating) 18 ♖xd7, with a clear advantage to White;

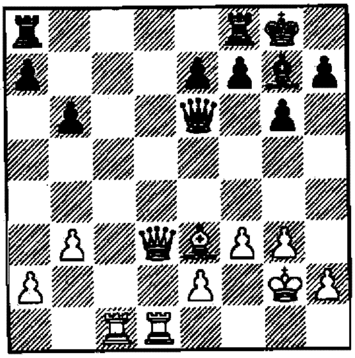
(b) 15...♘a6 16 ♘c6 ♕e6 17 ♕d3 ♖fc8. Now the plausible 18 ♕xa6 ♖xc6 (18...♕xe3 fails to 19 ♘xe7+) 19 ♕b7 ♖cc8! 20 ♔f2 (or 20 ♖fd1 ♖cb8 21 ♕e4 ♕xe4 22 fxe4 ♖b7, with a tenable position) gives Black counterplay by 20...♕h3. To maintain his advantage White therefore has to find the variation 18 ♕e4! (18 ♘xe7+!? also deserves consideration) 18...♕xe4 19 fxe4 ♖c7 (19...♔f8 loses to 20 ♘xa7!) 20 b4!

Nevertheless, Black should have gone in for this latter variation, since as the game goes things are totally bad for him.

15 ♘xc6 ♕xc6
16 ♖c1 ♕e6

In my game with Spassky (Manila 1976) Black preferred 16...♕b7, but after 17 ♕d3 0-0 18 ♖fd1 ♖fc8 19 ♕d7 (19 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 20 ♕d7 is also good) 19...♕xd7 20 ♖xd7 White retained the advantage, and I missed the win only on the 40th move.

17 ♕d3 0-0
18 ♖fd1!



This is stronger than 18 ♖c4, as Portisch played against me in the game mentioned earlier, which continued 18...f5! 19 ♖d1 ♔f7!, when Black was threatening to neutralise White's pressure on the d-file by 20...♖fd8.

18 ... ♖ac8?!

This move does not get Black out of his difficulties. In the following round it was found that 18...f5 (this is how in the diagram position I played against Tal) similarly failed to give equality. Tal continued 19 ♕c4 ♔f7 20 ♕xe6+ ♔xe6 21 ♖c6+ ♔f7 22 ♗g5 ♖fc8 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♖d7, with a serious advantage.

Black can gain counterplay by 18...h5!, and if 19 ♖c7 ♖ad8 (19...♖fd8 fails to the thematic 20 ♖xa7) 20 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 21 ♖xd8+ ♔h7 22 ♖d3 ♗h6, although even here after 23 ♔f2 ♕h3 24 ♔g1 White stands better.

19 ♖xc8 ♕xc8

If 19...♖xc8 20 ♕d7, and since 20...♖c2 fails to 21 ♕e8+ ♗f8 22 ♖d8 ♖xe2+ 23 ♗f2, 20...♕xd7 is forced, and leads to a familiar position from the Polugayevsky-Spassky game.

20 ♕d7!

This demonstrates White's advantage. His lead in development has resulted in the seizure of one of the open files, while as before it is not easy for Black to complete his mobilisation.

20 ... ♕a6
21 ♖d2 e6
22 ♗g5!

A strong move, after which 22...♗f6 and 23...♖d8, as my opponent was planning, is impossible.

22 ... h6

Of course, Black did not care for 22...b5 23 ♗e7, when his rook has to go to a8 (23...♖c8 loses to 24 ♖d6), but after the move played things are even worse for him.

23 ♗d8

Now Black's rook is locked in, and his position is practically lost.

23 ... ♗e5

Here 23...b5 is most simply met by 24 ♖c2, although 24 ♗e7 ♖b8 25 ♗d8 is also possible, with the threat of 26 ♕e8+ and 27 ♖d7.

24 a4!

Black's queenside pawns are fixed on dark squares and immobilised. The black queen is also restricted.

24 ... ♔g7
25 ♖c2 b5

So as to somehow complicate the game, otherwise Black simply has nothing to move.

26 axb5 ♕a1

Smyslov hopes to place his bishop at d4, and create counterplay, but White easily prevents this.

27 ♗e7 ♖h8

27...♖b8 looks slightly better, and if 28 ♖c8, then 28...♕a2! (28...♕b2 loses immediately to 29 ♗f8+ ♔g8 30 ♗a3+), attacking the e2 pawn. Now 29 ♔f2? is parried by 29...♗d4+. But White is not obliged to play 28 ♖c8, and in principle Black is already lost.

28 ♖c4 ♕b2
29 ♖e4

The d4 square is defended, and the e2 pawn too.

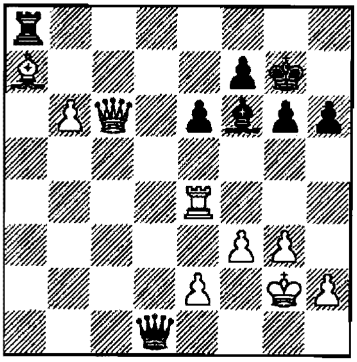
29 ... ♖b8
30 ♗c5

The threat of 31 ♖xe5 forces Black to exchange his a-pawn for the pawn at b3, and White acquires a menacing passed pawn.

30 ... ♗f6
31 ♗xa7 ♖a8
32 b6

White also wins by 32 ♗d4 ♗xd4 33 ♕xd4+ ♕xd4 34 ♖xd4 ♖b8 35 ♖b4, but the way chosen seemed to me more logical.

32 ... ♕xb3
33 ♕c6 ♕d1



In a hopeless position, the ex-World Champion, whose games in recent years, incidentally, have contained many more tacical blows than formerly, finds an interesting possibility in the search for perpetual check.

34 ♕c4

With a limited reserve of time, White has no need at all to calculate variations such as 34 ♕xa8 ♗d4 35 ♖xd4 ♕xe2+ 36 ♔h3 ♕f1+ 37 ♔g4 f5+, although even here his king finally escapes from the pursuit. It is simpler to defend d4, and to win the black rook by other means. For instance, now the simple 35 b7 is threatened.

34 ... ♖c8

But what else?

35 ♕xc8

Here the white queen remains in play, and will defend her king.

35 ... ♗d4
36 ♖xd4 ♕xe2+
37 ♔h3 ♕f1+
38 ♔g4 e5

After 38...f5+ 39 ♔f4 Black does not even have a check at c1.

39 ♖d7 h5+
40 ♔g5 ♕xf3
41 ♖xf7+

And **Black resigned** in view of the possible variation 41...♔xf7 42 ♕d7+ ♔g8 43 b7.

A perfectly reasonable question arises: why in the following round did I voluntarily go in for this variation as Black? This surprised all the contestants, all the spectators, and also Tal himself, who constantly glanced in astonishment first at the board, and then at me.

This illogical – I give this word without inverted commas – decision is explained by the fact that, against Tal, I wanted to employ a move analogous to that which I had played against Portisch. This is indeed what I did, but in my preparations I overlooked two strong rejoinders by White, and of course would have lost, had not Tal 'declared an amnesty'.

I think it unlikely that anyone will be in a hurry to repeat this experiment. Provided, of course, that he is familiar with the above game.

A PRESENT TO OURSELVES

Polugayevsky-Tal

USSR Championship ½-Final, Tbilisi 1956
Queen's Gambit Declined

I have played on many occasions against Mikhail Tal, the 'magician' from Riga, who has left his very distinctive mark on chess. It would be wrong of me to complain about the results of our meetings: I have managed to win much more often than I have lost. But more than any other, I remember this particular, drawn game. It was played by two young masters in their early twenties. It sticks in my mind not because it was of great competitive significance: we met in the first half of a Semi-Final tournament of the USSR Championship, when each half point was not yet valued in its weight of possible championship gold.

There was another reason. We had both just begun our careers in big-time chess, we were both ambitious, and – like, however, all our contemporaries – did not miss a single opportunity to test our strength. Therefore no game between us could be sluggish, cautious and colourless. It was bound to become crucial, both as a theoretical duel, and in the field of tactical complications: youth is typically proud of its deep, accurate and rapid calculation of variations. At that time Mikhail Tal was already famous for this quality, and I had no wish to be left behind. It could be said that Tal's combinations injured my pride, and that it was Misha in particular that I endeavoured to excel in a tactical battle.

Of course, today I recall with a smile all these incentives, which are typical of youth. And at the same time I envy that Polugayevsky, who was endlessly tenacious, and fantastically hard-working.

And what's more: in this game it was I who performed in Tal's customary role of attacker, and it is probably for this reason that the game has gladdened me for so many years. I also realised that, after playing such a game, a player crosses some sort of boundary in his own development, and can then advance... It is customary to say: 'The grandmasters made a present to chess fans of a fine game.' This game – I would venture to say with egotistical frankness – Tal and I presented in particular to ourselves. And, as it seems to me, we were both happy with the outcome...

1 d4 d5

A surprise! Before the game I had prepared certain lines of the Modern Benoni, which was then most frequently employed by Tal. But perhaps, being a subtle psychologist, Tal sensed my 'super-aggressive' mood.

2 c4 e6
3 ♘c3 c5
4 e3

Why did I choose this particular continuation in the Tarrasch Defence? As the reader already knows, I was then under the very strong creative influence of Mikhail Botvinnik, who played positions with an isolated queen's pawn in virtuoso fashion. I, too, did not object to such set-ups, I had studied them a great deal, and readily chose them both with White and with Black. They corresponded to my style at the time, and frequently enabled me to attain success in the resulting sharp play, where everything depends on the activity of the two players.

4 . . . ♘f6
5 ♘f3 ♘c6
6 a3 cxd4

Now everyone knows that 6...a6 gives Black good equalising chances, although it allows White the right to decide who will have the isolated queen's pawn. But at that time many opening subtleties were not yet known.

7 exd4 ♗e7
8 ♗d3

8 c5 is considered strongest, transposing into a favourable variation of the Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann Defence. But I was too fond of playing positions with an isolated pawn to betray them. Besides, against Tal in particular I wanted to attack.

8 . . . dxc4
9 ♗xc4 0-0
10 0-0 b6

Nowadays it has been established that in such set-ups it is better for Black to play ...a7-a6 and...b7-b5, controlling the c4 square, and creating the possible counter ...b5-b4. But the game with Tal took place nearly 40 years ago!

11 ♕d3 ♗b7
12 ♖d1 ♖c8
13 ♗a2

An ideal post for the bishop. It moves out of the line of fire, but maintains control of d5, and if necessary can be transferred to b1.

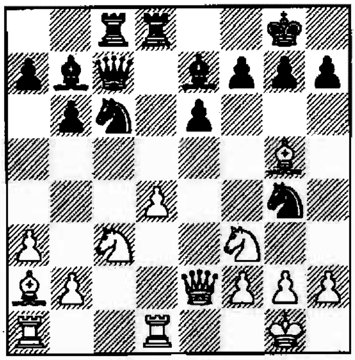
13 . . . ♕c7

According to our present-day understanding, Black's king's rook should go to e8. But passive defence is not for Tal, and he plans counterplay against the d4 pawn.

14 ♗g5 ♖fd8
15 ♕e2

Both sides have completed their planned piece dispositions. And it turns out that the black queen is badly placed at c7. It can come under attack by the white rook at c1, or the knight from b5; there is also the possible threat of ♗xf6 and d4-d5. But what Tal has in mind is purely tactical play.

15 . . . ♘g4



This move cannot be condemned: Black can hardly be expected to go in for the dull 15...♘d5 16 ♘xd5 exd5, with a clearly inferior position. The knight attack is the logical continuation of Black's incorrect plan. True, it was not easy to find the refutation.

For the moment 16...♘xd4 is threatened. This would be the answer, for instance, to 16 ♗xe6, when Black wins – 16...♘xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♗xf3 18 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19 ♕xf3 ♕xh2+, and so on. After 16 ♗xe7, on the other hand, Black does not need to launch a counter-attack by 16...♘xd4, although this too is possible; the simple 16...♘xe7 gives him a good position.

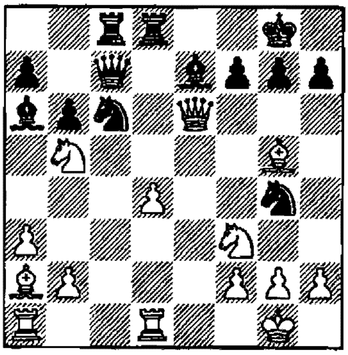
But White has in no way sinned against the laws of chess, such that he should come under a dangerous attack! After thinking for a little along such lines, I succeeded in detecting a weakness in Black's attacking plan. This is in fact one of those instances where it is essential, without fail, to find a refutation of the somewhat 'flank-orientated' play of one of the players.

16 ♘b5 ♗a6

Better here was 16...♘xd4 17 ♖xd4! (bad is 17 ♘bxd4 ♖xd4, when 18...♗xf3 is again threatened) 17...♗xf3 18 ♘xc7 ♗xe2 19 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 (19...♖xd8 is also answered by 20 ♘xe6) 20 ♘xe6 ♗xg5 (20...fxe6 21 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 22 ♗xc8 ♗xg5 23 ♖e1) 21 ♘xg5, and White retains the advantage, although whether it is sufficient to win is not clear.

Instead of this, Tal prefers to add fuel to the fire, but he overlooks White's reply.

17 ♕xe6!

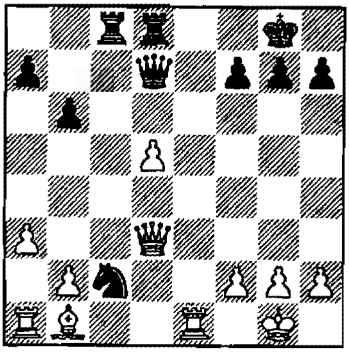


It is probably not often that a queen has been sacrificed against Tal! It transpires that after 17...fxe6 18 ♗xe6+ and 19 ♘xc7 Black comes out a pawn down, while 17...♗xg5 loses, if only because of 18 ♘xc7 fxe6 19 ♘xe6. There remains only one move:

17 . . . ♗xb5
18 ♕xg4 ♗e2
19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7
20 ♖e1 ♗xf3
21 ♕xf3 ♕d7

On making this move, Black offered a draw. It seems that he regains his pawn, but... White had prepared a clever trap, and so he declined the offer.

22 d5 ♘d4
23 ♕d3 ♘c2
24 ♗b1!!



The point of White's play. Black is obliged to swim with the tide.

24 . . . ♘xe1
25 ♕xh7+ ♔f8
26 ♗f5!

It turns out that Black has no reasonable move. 26...♘f3+ 27 gxf3 ♕xd5, for instance, fails to the simple 28 ♗xc8, while the trappy 26...♕e8, hoping for 27 ♕h8+ ♔e7 28 ♖xe1+ ♔d6 29 ♖xe8 ♖c1 and mates, is refuted by the *zwischenzug* 27 ♗xc8.

26 . . . ♕xd5
27 ♖xe1 f6

27...♕e5 fails to 28 ♕h8+ ♔e7 29 ♖xe5+ ♔f6 30 ♕h4+ ♔xe5 31 g4.

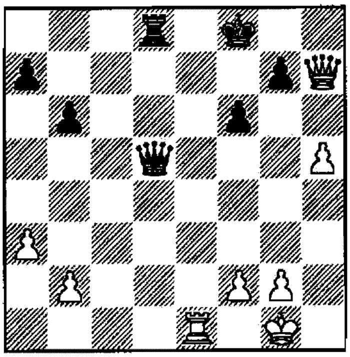
28 ♗xc8 ♖xc8
29 h4

Against the check at h8 Black can block with his queen. White therefore 'contents himself' with an extra pawn and an attack.

29 . . . ♖d8
30 h5?

The calculation of all the complex and lengthy variations had taken me a great deal of time. Hence this mistake, after which the game transposes into a rook ending without any real winning chances.

After 30 ♖e3 Black would probably not have lasted long.



30 ... ♕d3
31 ♕xd3

Alas, it is impossible to keep the queens on. The remainder does not require any commentary: the queenside pawns are exchanged, and a theoretically drawn position is reached.

31...♖xd3 32 ♖c1 ♖b3 33 ♖c2 ♔g8 34 g4 ♔h7 35 ♔g2 ♔h6 36 f3 a5 37 ♔g3 a4 38 ♖c4

Otherwise there follows ...b6-b5-b4.

38...♖xb2

On 38...b5?? White replies 39 ♖b4.

39 ♖xa4 ♖b3 40 ♖a8 ♔h7 41 ♔f4 b5 42 ♔e4 ♖c3 43 ♖a5 b4 44 axb4 ♖c4+ 45 ♔f5 ♖xb4 46 ♖a7 ♖b3 47 f4 ♖b5+ 48 ♔e6 ♖b4 Drawn

SHELL VERSUS ARMOUR

Polugayevsky-Petrosian

27th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1960
Nimzo-Indian Defence

At that time I played much better with White than with Black, and therefore I valued particularly highly the right of the first move, and endeavoured to squeeze the maximum out of every 'White' game.

Nevertheless, in my game with Petrosian, even with White I was by no means confident of success. Because in those days, Petrosian, who was heading for the chess crown, used to lose even less frequently than once a year. It was easier to win the Soviet Championship than a game against 'iron Tigran', as the journalists nick-named him.

But even without any guarantee of success, I intended to engage him in a fight, and I decided to give my opponent, who like myself was fond of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, the chance to play a certain interesting variation. In this opening, despite its colossal popularity, at that time there was much unexplored territory. This could not be completely eliminated, either by the numerous practical games, or by the theoretical analyses, reviews and comments, which appeared in every chess publication. There was ample scope for anyone to do his own research, and I decided to analyse one particular variation. Especially since there was every justification for expecting this opening: a little earlier, Petrosian had achieved little in a game against me in a King's Indian Defence.

But I nevertheless decided against my favourite Sämisch Variation in the Nimzo-Indian Defence, even though there too I had something in reserve. The point was that the Sämisch Variation led to a blocked pawn structure, and this corresponded much more to Petrosian's style than to mine. In his ability to 'outflank' an opponent, Tigran Vartanovich, who was not yet World Champion, then had no equal in the world.

And what's more, in analysing Petrosian's games, I noticed one feature. In those rare instances when he did lose, or obtained an inferior position, it was when his opponents played directly and sharply, because Petrosian, at times fearing something at the board, would avoid a critical dispute in the opening.

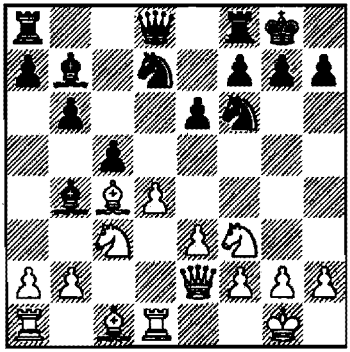
It was this that provoked the decision to play the variation which in fact occurred, one that is rich in open, tactical play.

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 e6
3 ♘c3 ♗b4
4 e3 0-0
5 ♗d3 d5
6 ♘f3 c5
7 0-0 dxc4
8 ♗xc4 b6

At that time this topical variation occurred hundreds of times in the most varied of events at every level. The resulting position was subjected to the most painstaking analysis.

It is now known that White's best continuation is 9 a3, but at the time he rather straightforwardly and routinely used to carry out his basic idea of ♕e2 and ♖d1.

9 ♕e2 ♗b7
10 ♖d1 ♘bd7?



A serious positional error, which leads immediately to a difficult position. It is essential to relieve the situation in the centre, and to neutralise White's pressure on the d-file. The only move that answers these demands is 10...cxd4. Incidentally all this was later tested in practice. After 10...cxd4 11 exd4 ♗xc3 or 11...♘bd7 White has been unable to show that he has the slightest advantage.

11 d5!

At that time theorists had mentioned the possibility of this move, but no one thought it to be particularly dangerous for Black. To me this assessment seemed dubious, and a thorough analysis enabled me to discover the truth. Despite the fact that Black's pieces are fully mobilised, the central breakthrough is extremely unpleasant for him. It is after this that the position of the white rook opposite the black queen enables White to develop a very strong initiative.

11 ... ♗xc3
12 dxe6 ♗a5

Black did not care for the pawn sacrifice 12...fxe6. Indeed, by continuing 13 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 14 bxc3 ♕e7 15 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 16 ♘e1 White advances f2-f3 and e3-e4, when it is clear that Black has insufficient compensation for the lost pawn.

The attempt to retreat the bishop to a more comfortable post by 12...♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♗e5 is also unattractive, in view of 14 exd7 ♕c7 15 ♕h3! ♖ad8 16 f4 ♗d6 17 ♕f3 followed by 18 e4.

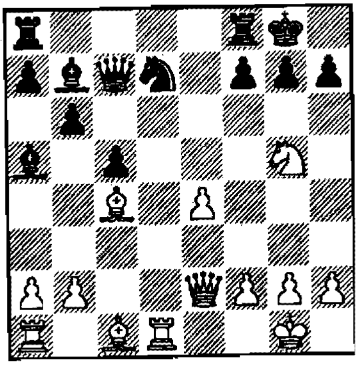
But after the move played the black bishop is out of play, and this enables White to take immediate action in the centre and on the kingside.

13 exd7 ♕c7
14 e4!

A strong move. The undefended pawn is invulnerable! Both 14...♘xe4 15 ♘g5 ♘xg5 (15...♘f6 16 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 17 ♕e6) 16 ♗xg5, and 14...♗xe4 15 ♗g5! ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♘xd7 (16...♕e5 17 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 18 d8=♕+ ♖xd8 19 ♖xd8+ ♘e8 20 ♗b5) 17 ♗f4 ♕c8 (17...♘e5 18 ♕g3 ♖fe8 19 ♖d5) 18 ♗d6, lead to loss of material for Black.

14 ... ♘xd7
15 ♘g5

White discovers a vulnerable spot in his opponent's position. In many variations the weakness of the f7 square proves to be a telling factor.



Now Black is faced with the threat of 16 ♘e6, and it is not easy for him to find a satisfactory defence. The following variations demonstrate convincingly that White has the advantage:

(a) 15...♘f6 16 e5 ♖ae8 17 e6 ♕c6 18 f3 fxe6 19 ♗b5;

(b) 15...♘e5 16 ♗f4 ♖ae8 17 ♕h5 h6 18 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 19 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 21 ♖d8+;

(c) 15...♖ae8 16 f3 (the quietest; 16 ♗f4 ♕xf4 17 ♖xd7 ♕xg5 18 ♖xb7 is also good for White) 16...h6 17 ♘h3 and ♗f4;

(d) 15...♗c6 16 ♕f3! ♘e5 (16...♘f6 17 ♗f4) 17 ♕f5 g6 18 ♕h3 h5 19 ♗f4 ♕e7 20 ♗d5 ♗xd5 21 exd5 ♖ad8 22 ♕g3.

It is noteworthy that in all these examples the black bishop at a5 merely plays the role of a 'spectator'.

To defend against the threat of 16 ♘e6, Petrosian played the natural...

15 ... ♖ad8

But at this point came the decisive blow.

16 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7

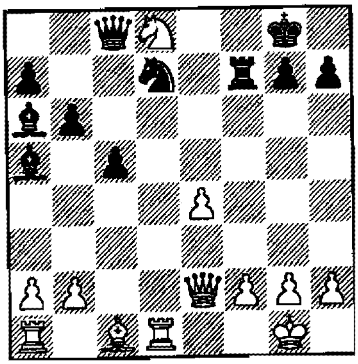
17 ♘e6

The point of White's combination.

17 ... ♕c8

18 ♘xd8 ♗a6!

Black finds the best chance. On 18...♕xd8 the advance e4-e5-e6 wins quickly.



19 ♕e3

The only way. White had to foresee this difficult move when he began his combination. 19 ♕g4 seems to win easily, but in this case Black had prepared a clever trap: 19...♕xd8 20 e5 ♕e8 21 e6 ♖e7!

19 ... ♖e7

Here too 19...♕xd8 is bad, in view of 20 e5 ♖e7 21 e6 ♗c8 22 ♕b3.

20 ♕b3+ c4

21 ♕a3

Again indirectly defending the knight at d8. 21...♕xd8 is met decisively by 22 ♗g5, e.g. 22...♔f7 23 ♕d6 ♗c8 24 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 25 ♕c7 ♕e8 26 ♕xc4+ ♔f8 27 ♖ac1 ♗b7 28 ♕c7 ♕xe4 29 ♕d8+.

21 ... ♘c5

22 ♗e3 ♖xe4

23 ♗xc5 ♕xc5

24 ♕f3 Black resigns

24...♖e7 is met by the spectacular 25 ♘e6.

I recall very well how, after this game, the journalists rushed to seek an interview with me. After all, at that time Tigran Petrosian, with his astounding 'sense of danger', was the most invincible player in the world. And here – a defeat, and what's more, in 24 moves!

At the time I was still a young master, and to the journalists I said sincerely that I myself could not believe that I had won.

And that until that day I had enjoyed few such happy moments in chess. And it was not the future World Champion's fault, but his misfortune, that he should choose a variation that I had analysed in detail beforehand...

DON'T BELIEVE YOUR OPPONENT

Polugayevsky-Spassky

26th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959

Nimzo-Indian Defence

I have never started a USSR Championship as badly as I did then, in Tbilisi. Three points out of nine, and not a single win – it was enough to upset anyone. And me especially, being a rather impressionable person.

There was another depressing factor. In the previous Championship, which had the status of a Zonal Tournament, I had shared 5th-6th places with Boris Spassky, only half a point behind the fourth-placed competitor, who had gone forward to the Interzonal Tournament. And I realised that success here would give me, then still a young master, the title of USSR grandmaster. But what kind of success was possible after such a start?! In short, I was dejected, and not without reason, but only until I suddenly sensed that there was nowhere to retreat to. Only as the 'desperation of the doomed' can I explain that maximum intensity of mental effort that I experienced. And the extraordinary happened: in the next nine rounds I gained eight points, defeating grandmasters of the class of Spassky, Taimanov and Korchnoi. What's more, I won five games in a row.

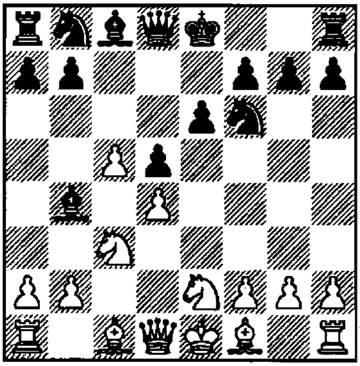
As regards the purely chess content of the present game, in my preparations for it I devoted considerable attention to the opening. It was well known that, in the early stage of the game, Spassky would sometimes permit himself moves that were not the strongest, since he had not made a fundamental study of opening theory. And I pinned my hopes on the fact that my opponent might possibly not have followed the latest discoveries of theory and practice.

And that is indeed what happened.

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 e6
3 ♘c3 ♗b4
4 e3 c5
5 ♘ge2

White avoids the well-studied variations resulting from 5 ♘f3 and 6 ♗d3, in favour of a less analysed continuation.

5 ... cxd4
6 exd4 d5
7 c5



It is with this move that White's hopes are associated. He creates a pawn majority on the queenside, while in return, of course, allowing his opponent active possibilities in the centre.

7 ... ♘c6

In the well-known game Averbakh-Panno (Portoroz 1958), Black played differently: 7...♘e4 8 ♗d2 ♘xd2 9 ♕xd2 b6 10 a3 ♗xc3 11 ♘xc3 bxc5 12 ♗b5+ ♗d7 13 dxc5 a5, with good counterplay.

But White is not obliged to check with his bishop at b5, and can play 12 dxc5 immediately.

Two rounds later Taimanov played 7... ♘e4 against me, and after 8 ♗d2 ♘c6 9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 was clearly not averse to repeating the game Saidy-Padevsky (Varna 1958), where there followed 11 ♕a4+ ♘c6, with complicated play. But I employed an innovation – 11 ♘c3!, and after 11...♕xd4 12 ♕xd4 ♘c2+ 13 ♔d2 ♘xd4 14 ♘xe4 I retained a stable advantage in the ending, and won.

8 a3 ♗a5

It is difficult to say which is better, the retreat to a5 or the exchange on c3. Spassky decides to retain his dark-square bishop, in connection with his planned counter ...e6-e5.

9 b4 ♗c7
10 g3

In this way White reduces somewhat the activity of the bishop at c7. In addition, the move prepares the development of the white bishop at g2, which after ...e6-e5 will be very active.

10 ... e5
11 ♗g2 ♗g4

Probably the strongest continuation. In the event of 11...exd4 12 ♘b5 White's advantage is undisputed.

12 f3

Practically forced. After 12 h3 ♗h5 13 g4 ♗g6 the black pieces are very actively placed.

12 ... ♗f5
13 0-0 0-0
14 ♘b5

Probably not the best. To be considered was 14 ♗g5 h6 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 f4!, with an advantage.

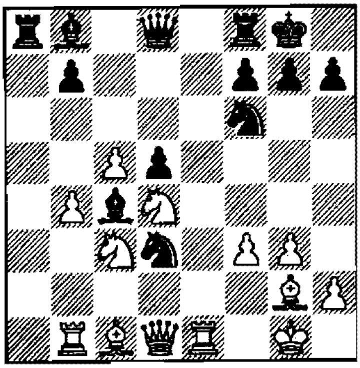
14 ... ♗b8
15 dxe5 ♘xe5

Considerably stronger than the capture with the bishop, on which 16 ♘bd4 follows.

16 ♘ed4

This, too, is probably not the best. 16 ♗f4 is more logical, aiming for the exchange of dark-square bishops.

16 ... ♗d3
17 ♖e1 ♗c4
18 ♘c3 a5
19 ♖b1 axb4
20 axb4 ♘d3



Too hasty. Black has achieved satisfactory counterplay, and should have completed his development by 20...♖e8. Now White gains a clear advantage.

21 ♖e3 ♘xc1
22 ♖xc1 ♕d7
23 ♕d2 ♗c7
24 ♗f1!

Eliminating a well-placed black piece, after which the weakness of the d5 pawn becomes apparent.

24 ... ♖fe8
25 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8
26 ♘db5! ♗xf1

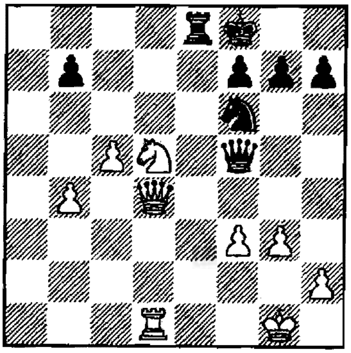
On 26...♗e5 there could have followed 27 ♗xc4 dxc4 28 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 29 ♘e4.

27 ♘xc7 ♕xc7
28 ♖xf1 ♕e5
29 ♖d1

Here we can take stock.

White obviously has a marked advantage, since the d5 pawn is attacked, he has the d4 square at his disposal, and he is threatening to advance his b- and c-pawns. Black could have defended his pawn by 29...♖d8, to which White was intending to reply 30 ♕d4, retaining a positional advantage.

29 ... ♔f8
30 ♕d4 ♕f5
31 ♘xd5



The start of a little combination, based on the following continuation: 31...♖d8 32 c6!, when the following lines are possible:

(a) 32...bxc6 33 ♕c5+ ♔g8 34 ♘e7+;

(b) 32...b6 (it was this move that Spassky considered possible in his preliminary calculations) 33 ♕xb6 ♖xd5 34 ♕b8+ ♘e8 35 ♖e1;

(c) 32...♖xd5 33 cxb7 ♖xd4 34 b8=♕+ ♘e8 35 ♖xd4 ♕b1+ 36 ♔f2 ♕b2+ 37 ♔e3, and the white king hides from the checks.

All the continuations given are clearly in White's favour, but Black has a stronger reply: 32...♕xd5! 33 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 34 cxb7 ♖b8 35 ♖xd5 ♖xb7, and analysis shows that Black has better chances of drawing than White has of winning.

For example: 36 b5 ♔e7 37 ♔f2 ♔e6 38 ♖c5 ♔d6 39 ♖h5 g6 40 ♖xh7 ♔e6 with a draw, or 36 ♖d4 ♖a7!, with the threat of posting the rook behind the passed pawn on the b-file.

Thus it can be concluded that Black was correct in allowing White to capture on d5, but that he should definitely have replied 31...♖d8.

White, on the other hand, was wrong to be tempted by the combinational possibility 31 ♘xd5, and by continuing 31 ♔g2, followed by 32 ♖d2 and 33 b5, he could have maintained a considerable positional advantage.

But Spassky took me 'at my word'.

31 ... ♘xd5?

This move is the decisive mistake.

32 ♕xd5 ♕c2

Here the exchange of queens, 32...♕xd5 33 ♖xd5 and now 33...♖e1+ 34 ♔f2 ♖b1, does not give Black any serious chances of saving the game: the white king heads for b5, and this is decisive.

Spassky hopes after 32...♕c2 to invade on the second rank with his rook.

33 ♕d6+! ♔g8
34 ♕d3

Without the preliminary check at d6, this move would have been impossible, in view of the familiar combination ...♖e1+, and if ♖xe1 ♕xd3.

But now in this case Black would be mated by the rook on e8.

34 ... ♕b2
35 ♕e4!

Winning a second pawn.

35 ... ♔f8
36 ♕xb7 g6
37 ♕b6

The only defence, but an adequate one, against the threat of 37...♖e2, on which there now follows 38 ♕d8+ ♔g7 39 ♕d4+.

37 ... ♔g7
38 c6

Once again threatening 39 ♕d4+.

38 ... ♔h6
39 ♕c5

Now the exchange of queens by 40 ♕c1+ is threatened.

39 ... g5
40 c7 ♖e2
41 ♕f8+

Black resigns, since after 41 ♔g6 White wins by 42 ♖d6+ f6 43 ♖xf6+.

WITH THE OPPONENT'S FAVOURITE WEAPON

Fischer-Polugayevsky

Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970
English Opening

Strangely enough, I have played against Fischer on only one, single occasion. And I can only regret it, if – through no fault of my own – we do not manage to play again, since my meeting with the future World Champion (at the time he was making his last steps towards the chess throne) proved interesting, and afforded me considerable creative satisfaction.

We played in the 11th round of the Interzonal Tournament. It will be remembered that Fischer took first place in it, but at the time of our meeting his tournament fate appeared by no means untroubled. In the ninth round he had 'come a cropper' against Larsen, and in the tenth had drawn with Portisch, but after having a dubious position. Naturally, Fischer had become nervy, and his play bore the stamp of irritation. And my trainer, grandmaster Boleslavsky, and I realised that Fischer would 'throw himself' at me. We had no doubt that he would begin the game with 1 e4, and that meant a Sicilian Defence.

We prepared two possible variations, one of them being that which had occurred in the Fischer-Larsen game. But I realised that Fischer, with his fanatical devotion to chess, might find some improvement, and so I also had in reserve another development scheme. In this one, too, a critical opening discussion would result, but we were firmly resolved: definitely no passive, exclusively defensive actions! And before the game I was already seized by competitive fervour. Knowing how many were afraid of Fischer, I 'agreed with myself' *a priori*: I would regard each of his moves with a certain scepticism.

I arrived at the tournament hall some 30 seconds late, and sat down at the board. What's this?! There's no Fischer, but on the board the white c-pawn stands at c4.

I thought that I must have gone to the wrong table. I stood up, looked at the demonstration board, and then realised: all my opening preparation had been in vain, since for virtually the first time in his life Fischer had played 1 c4. And this in spite of his unbelievable attachment to his favourite opening schemes.

I sank into thought: what evil intention did my opponent have? In what variation was he trying to catch me? After a few minutes I nevertheless decided to play my usual favourite system.

1 c4 ♘f6
2 g3 c6
3 ♗g2 d5
4 ♘f3

White sacrifices a pawn, evidently intending to answer 4...dxc4 with 5 ♕c2 b5 6 b3. Subsequently it was demonstrated that this is favourable for White, but I rejected the sacrifice purely intuitively.

4 ... ♗f5

I have often employed such a set-up, but in the given specific situation Black's plan has a defect.

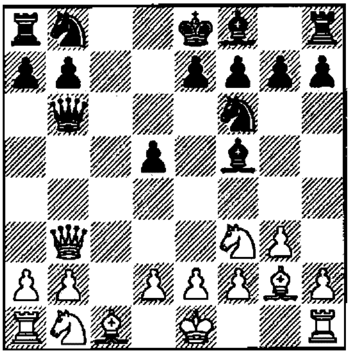
5 ♕b3

The correct plan, but inaccurately implemented. White gains an advantage by first exchanging on d5.

5 ... ♕b6
6 cxd5 ♕xb3
7 axb3 cxd5?!

It was only later that I realised that 7...♘xd5 is correct. It is curious that grandmaster Trifunovic, annotating this game in *Informator*, recommended after 7...♘xd5 a variation which, in his opinion, was favourable for White. At the tournament in Mar del Plata in 1971, the Argentine master Sumiacher specially repeated Fischer's moves against me. I played 7...♘xd5, on which there followed the *Informator* recommendation of 8 ♘c3? (8 d3, restricting the black bishop at f5, is the most sensible) 8...♘b4 9 ♘d4?? e5!, and White could have resigned, which is what he indeed did after 10 ♖xa7 and a further few unnecessary moves.

After the move played, Black gets into difficulties: White seizes the initiative on the queenside.



8 ♘c3 ♘c6
9 d3 e6

During the game I wanted to first return my bishop to d7, but then I regretted the time involved.

10 0-0 ♗e7

10...♔d7 is not good, on account of 11 ♖d1 with the threat of 12 e4, but 10...♗c5 is more active, and if 11 ♘a4 ♗d6, while on 11 ♗g5 the simple 11...0-0 is possible.

11 ♗e3!

Only here did I realise the seriousness of my position Now on 11...0-0 White has the unpleasant reply 12 ♘d4 ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 a6 14 e4. It would be particularly unpleasant playing such a passive position against Fischer.

I sensed that I had to find some means of disturbing the balance, even at the cost of some irrational move.

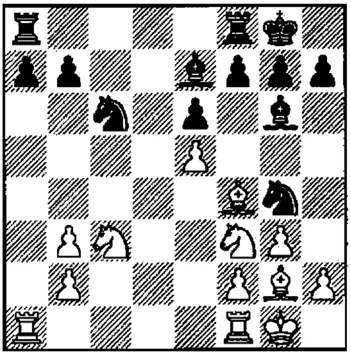
11 ... ♘g4!

From the point of view of what has been said, this is absolutely necessary. Now concrete tactical play begins, in which Black finds the best moves.

12 ♗f4 0-0
13 e4

If Fischer had foreseen the consequences, he would not have been in a hurry to make this move. The quiet 13 ♖fc1 looks more unpleasant for Black.

13 ... dxe4
14 dxe4 ♗g6
15 e5



White's intention is revealed. The retreat of the knight from g4 is now cut off, and 16 h3 ♘h6 17 g4 is threatened, shutting it completely out of the game. But it is Black's move, and he utilises his activated light-square bishop for tactical play.

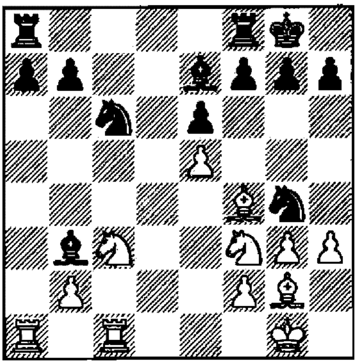
15 ... ♗d3!
16 ♖fd1

If 16 ♖fc1, then 16...♗c5, and the knight at g4 is in the game! Then 17 ♘d1 ♗b6 18 h3 ♘h6 19 g4 allows Black good counter-chances after 19...f6.

16 ... ♗c2
17 ♖fc1

If 17 ♖d2 ♗xb3 18 ♖d7, then 18...♗c5 19 ♘e4 ♗b6, and in view of the threat of 20...♗d5 Black stands well.

17 ... ♗xb3
18 h3



18 ... g5!

A counter-blow, by which Black avoids the passive position resulting after 18...♘h6 19 ♘d2.

19 hxg4 gxf4
20 ♘d2!

On 20 gxf4 Black seizes the d-file by 20...♖fd8, and stands slightly better.

20 ... f3!!

Black plays according to the favourite principle of Fischer himself: to answer blow with blow. What's more, he foresaw this before his 15th move. On 21 ♘xf3 there follows 21...♖fd8, while on 21 ♘xb3 fxg2 22 f4 there comes the same reply.

21 ♗xf3 ♘xe5
22 ♗g2

White is forced to lose a tempo, since after 22 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 23 ♖xa7 ♗c5 24 ♖a5 ♘d3 25 ♘xb3 ♗xf2+ 26 ♔f1 ♖xb7 he loses at least a pawn.

22 ... ♗d5
23 ♘xd5

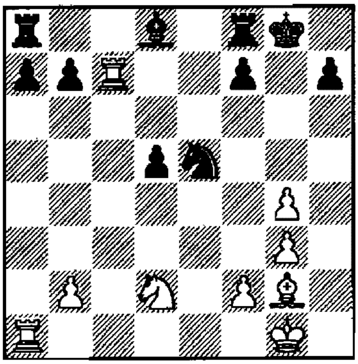
Or 23 ♗xd5 exd5 24 ♘xd5 ♗d8 25 f3 f5, with good counterplay.

23 ... exd5
24 ♖c7

24 ♗xd5 loses to 24...♖ad8.

24 ... ♗d8

The final finesse: the bishop is transferred to b6, reminding White of his weakness at f2.



25 ♖xb7 ♗b6
26 ♗xd5 ♖ad8
27 ♘e4 ♘xg4
28 ♖d1 ♔g7

A draw begins to look more and more likely.

29 ♖d2 ♘f6

The simplest: the opposite-colour bishops now make a draw inevitable.

30 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 31 ♖d3 ♔g7 32 ♔g2 ♖b8 33 ♖d7 ♖bd8 34 ♗c4 ♖xd7 35 ♖xd7 ♔g6 36 g4 ♖d8

In such a position Black does not mind giving up a pawn.

37 ♗xf7+ ♔g5 38 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 Drawn

Fischer was so upset by this, that he signed the scoresheet and quickly left the hall. Only later, when he had taken the lead, did we exchange a few words about the game, which, I repeat, afforded me great creative satisfaction.

I REFUTE... MYSELF!

Polugayevsky-Karpov
Candidates Quarter-Final, Moscow 1974
Nimzo-Indian Defence

The present game was the fifth in the Candidates Quarter-Final Match. A match, in which immediately after the pairings had been made, I was not particularly happy about the opponent who had 'fallen' to me. It is true that, on account of his youth, Anatoly Karpov did not yet number among the favourites, and it is true that he himself had said that it was not yet 'his' Candidates cycle. But his amazing successes, and his enormous talent, gathering strength with every day, demonstrated that in the chess world he was an exceptional phenomenon.

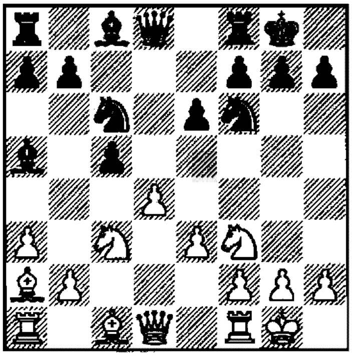
Perhaps it was for this reason that my attitude to the match was excessively serious. Leaving myself practically no opportunity for relaxation, I devoted all my time to opening preparation. I knew that Karpov never declined a theoretical duel, since he believed in himself, his analysis, and his ability to solve even unexpected problems at the board. And – I decided to spring a surprise on him: as Black to play 'my' Sicilian schemes, and as White – instead of my favourite 1 c4 to switch to 1 d4, and do battle in the main variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, which was firmly established in Karpov's repertoire. What's more, I attempted to find something new, although I realised that to 'refute' this very solid and sound defence was not possible. What I intended was to set the 22-year-old grandmaster new questions during the game.

In principle, at the start I succeeded in this, as will be described in the notes to the present game.

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**e6**
3	**♘c3**	**♗b4**
4	**e3**	**0-0**
5	**♗d3**	**c5**
6	**♘f3**	**d5**
7	**0-0**	**dxc4**
8	**♗xc4**	**♘c6**

The main variation of the defence, which has occurred in practice a great number of times.

9	**a3**	**♗a5**
10	**♗a2**	



The theoretical 10 ♘a4 does not promise White any special advantage. Therefore in the first game I played 10 ♗d3, and after 10...cxd4 11 exd4 ♗b6 12 ♗e3 ♘d5 I chose 13 ♗g5!, which I had prepared beforehand.

(Botvinnik called this continuation more promising than 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 h3 ♘e7 15 ♗g5 f6 16 ♗d2 ♗f5, after which the game Gligoric-Karpov, Hastings 1971/2, quickly ended in a draw.)

But the subtlety was not only in this one move. After 13...f6 White did not reply with the natural 14 ♗c1, on which there follows 14...♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 17 ♕xd4 ♘xc3, when Black has every chance of equalising, but 14 ♗e3! Here 14...♘ce7 15 ♕c2 ♘xe3 16 fxe3 g6 led to a difficult position for Black, but in subsequent analysis I succeeded in finding an improvement for him. And so in the third game I did not play 10 ♗d3, but 10 ♗a2.

10	**...**	**a6**

Only in the seventh game did Black hit upon the correct plan – 10...♗b6!, immediately attacking the opponent's pawn centre. There followed 11 dxc5 (White gains nothing by 11 ♘a4 cxd4 12 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 13 exd4 ♖d8, or 11 d5 exd5 12 ♘xd5 ♗e6) 11...♗xc5 12 b4 ♗d6 13 ♗b2 ♕e7 14 ♕c2, when Black's position was still slightly inferior.

11 ♗b1!!

When in the third game of the match after 11 ♘a4 cxd4 12 exd4 h6! 13 ♗f4 ♗c7 Black easily obtained an equal game, I thought to myself: is it worth going in for the same variation yet again? Is it worth 'losing' the white pieces for the sake of a theoretical argument? But nevertheless, I sensed that the truth was somewhere close at hand.

And suddenly, that which occurs fairly frequently did in fact happen. Quantity was transformed into quality – the many hours of analysis enabled me to hit upon the correct order of moves. They enabled me to inflict a serious blow on the system which Karpov chose in the match, and which had been constantly played by... me myself.

White can pride himself on the move in the game; contrary, apparently, to the unshakeable laws of chess, he moves his bishop three times in the opening, and, while still undeveloped, obtains a virtually won position.

11 ... ♗b6
12 ♕c2

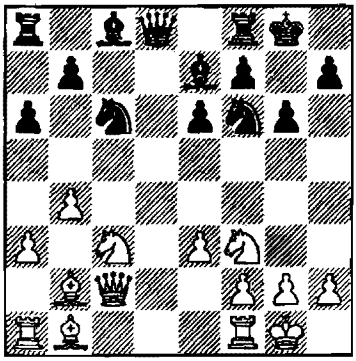
Straightforward and very strong. White has no reason to chase after his opponent's dark-square bishop: 12 ♘a4 cxd4 13 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 14 exd4 ♖d8 gives Black adequate counter-chances.

12 ... g6

This does not solve Black's defensive problems, but what is he to do? On 12... cxd4 13 exd4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 (totally bad is 14...♗xd4 15 ♗g5 g6 16 ♖d1, with the threat of 17 ♘e4) 15 ♗e3 ♕d6 16 ♗g5 Botvinnik recommends 16...♖d8, and considers that White still has to demonstrate the strength of his attack.

But firstly, the simple 17 ♗xf6 and 18 ♕xh7+ is good, and secondly, 17 ♘e4 is even stronger, after which Black has nothing better than 17...♘xe4 18 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 (18... ♘xf2?? 19 ♗xb6) 19 ♕xe4, when it is very difficult for him to complete his development.

13 dxc5 ♗xc5
14 b4 ♗e7
15 ♗b2



White has obtained a marked advantage. He has developed his forces with gain of time, whereas Black has no convenient squares for his queen or light-square bishop.

15 ... e5

Perhaps the best practical chance. Black loses quickly after, for instance, 15...b6 16 ♘e4 ♘xe4 17 ♕xe4, and if 17...♗b7, then 18 ♘e5.

16 ♖d1 ♕e8

Forced, since the natural 16...♕c7 17 ♗a2! ♗g4 18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♖ac8 20 ♕e4 leads to a decisive advantage for White.

17 b5

Also possible was the positional approach: 17 h3, followed by ♗a2 etc. But I was convinced that the position was ripe for more positive measures.

17 ... axb5
18 ♘xb5 ♗f5
19 ♕e2 ♗xb1

This loses the exchange without any compensation.

Slightly better was 19...e4 20 ♘h4 ♗g4 21 f3 exf3 22 gxf3 ♗h5 23 ♘c7 ♕c8 24 ♘xa8 ♕h3 25 ♘b6 ♕xh4 26 ♘d5 ♕g5+

27 ♕g2 ♘xd5 28 ♕xg5 ♗xg5 29 ♖xd5 ♗xe3+, although even here White should win.

20 ♘c7 ♕b8
21 ♘xa8 ♗f5

The only move. 21...e4 22 ♖axb1 exf3 23 ♕xf3 ♕xa8 fails to 24 ♗xf6.

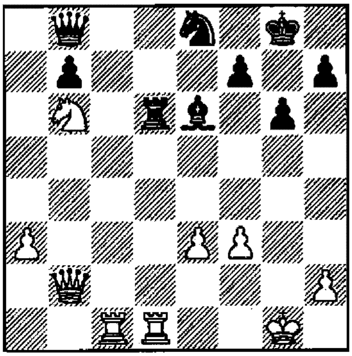
22 ♘b6 e4
23 ♘d4 ♘xd4
24 ♗xd4 ♗g4
25 f3 exf3
26 gxf3 ♗e6

Perhaps the bishop should have been retreated to h5, so as to keep the f3 pawn under attack, although Black's position is all the same lost.

27 ♖ac1 ♖d8
28 ♕b2!

The most exact. Black's pieces are driven back even further.

28 . . . ♘e8
29 ♗e5 ♗d6
30 ♗xd6 ♖xd6



31 ♕b4?

If this does not actually throw away the win, it makes it extremely difficult.

White could have quickly decided the game by 31 ♕b5 (denying the black queen the g5 square!) 31...♕d8 32 ♖xd6 ♘xd6 33 ♖d1 ♕c7 34 ♕e5, while 31 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 32 a4 and 33 ♕d4 was also good.

31 . . . ♕d8!

With a check at g5 the black queen breaks into the game.

32 ♖xd6 ♘xd6
33 ♖d1 ♕g5+
34 ♔f2 ♘f5
35 ♕f4 ♕f6
36 ♘a4!

In time trouble, White makes the first correct move along the selected path, but goes wrong later.

Black easily gains a draw after 36 ♘d7 ♕b2+ 37 ♔g1 ♗xd7 38 ♖xd7 ♕a1+ 39 ♔g2 ♕a2+ 40 ♔h3 ♕e6, or 36 ♘c4 ♗xc4 37 ♕xc4 ♕b2+ 38 ♕e2 ♕xa3.

36 . . . ♗b3
37 ♖d2?

Chances of success were still offered by 37 ♖e1, as suggested by Furman. In this way White defends his important e3 pawn, and can hope to gradually realise his material advantage.

37 . . . g5!
38 ♕b8+

With amazing coolness and skill, Karpov discovers every conceivable chance for counter-play. As for White, he had clearly lost his mental balance.

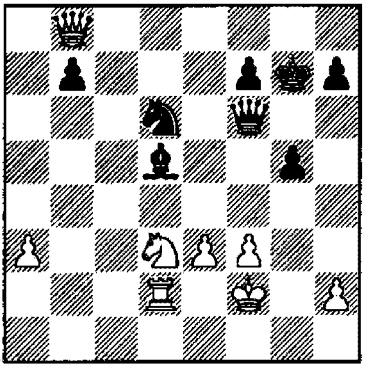
38 . . . ♔g7
39 ♘b2 ♗d5
40 ♘d3?

A further mistake, after which White is saved only by a miracle. 40 f4? fails, of course, to 40...♘d6, but 40 ♘d1 relieves White of all his worries. On 40...♘h4, as recommended, for instance, by Botvinnik, there follows 41 f4!, and Black loses: if 41...♗c6, then 42 ♕d8.

Black would have had to find the only saving move 40...♘xe3!!, after which he has either perpetual check, or a different sort of draw: 41 ♔xe3 ♕xf3+ 42 ♔d4 ♕e4+ 43 ♔c3 ♕c4+ 44 ♔b2 ♕a2+ 45 ♔c1 and now only 45...♕a1+! (after 45...♕xa3+ 46 ♖b2 ♕c5+ 47 ♖c2 White escapes from the checks) 46 ♔c2 ♕a2+ 47 ♘b2 ♕b3+ 48

♔c1 ♕c3+ 49 ♖c2 ♕e3+! 50 ♔b1 ♕e1+ 51 ♖c1 ♗e4+ 52 ♔a2 ♗d5+ (52...♕xc1? 53 ♕e5+) 53 ♘c4 ♕e6 54 ♔b3 ♕b6+ 55 ♔c3 ♗xc4 56 ♕e5+ f6 and 57...♗f7.

40 ... ♘d6!



Black's attack now appears irresistible, since the white queen is out of play. But with my next move I nevertheless succeeded in bringing the game to a draw.

41 ♘f4! gxf4
42 ♖xd5 ♕b2+

A queen and knight in combination can be very dangerous when pursuing a king, but Black has nothing more than a draw in the variation 42...fxe3+ 43 ♔xe3 ♕e6+ 44 ♔d4.

43 ♔f1!

After 43 ♔g1?? ♕b1+ and 44...♕a2+ White loses his rook.

43 ... fxe3

Now this variation is pointless: 43...♕b1+ 44 ♔e2 ♕a2+ 45 ♖d2.

44 ♖g5+!

Drawn: in view of 44...♔h6 45 ♕xd6+ ♔xg5 46 ♕e7+ ♔f4 47 ♕e4+, when the e3 pawn falls.

TRAIT FROM AN EARLY AGE

It is often asked: what is the reason for Garry Kasparov's enormous successes, and what comprises his marked superiority over other players? His knowledge of theory? But there are many other grandmasters who are familiar with all the opening discoveries. His skill in attack? But there are many other players who are prepared to go in for the most mind-boggling complications. Perhaps the stamp of his character? But here too it is not difficult to name players with a character and will of 'steel'.

The secret of the 13th World Champion is that he can do everything that others can, plus a little more in each individual component, and it is the sum of all these 'little mores' that comprises his appreciable superiority.

Take, for example, the field of openings. Like many theorists, Garry is familiar with all that is new in the openings, and for him a computer is a faithful assistant. But, in contrast to the majority of his colleagues, he aims to investigate as deeply as possible into the essence of a particular position and study it down to the smallest details, and each new position he transforms into a typical one, in order to know the methods and procedures in a similar situation. His searchings are often of an experimental nature, since Kasparov never stops at what he has achieved, but is constantly renewing his opening reserves. In short, the World Champion is distinguished by his exceptional opening erudition.

It is this harmonious collaboration of knowledge and theoretical searching that constitutes the basis of his outstanding achievements in the field of opening strategy. This trait was characteristic of him from an early age.

Or regarding Kasparov's unswerving striving for the initiative. Yes, he does not hide his love for Alekhine, and his slogan: 'Forward!, nothing but activity, the main thing is to impose your will on the opponent.' For the sake of the initiative Garry is ready to sacrifice a pawn, another one...

But this is not a senseless risk, these are steps that are well thought out and weighed up. As a rule, Kasparov's games abound in dynamic possibilities, in which it is easy to stumble, if you give in to your emotions. But the World Champion controls splendidly the situation on the board, and is able to keep his feelings firmly in check.

I think that an invaluable service to Kasparov was rendered by his matches with Anatoly Karpov, a great defensive player, who is able to punish any opponent for excessive 'liberties'.

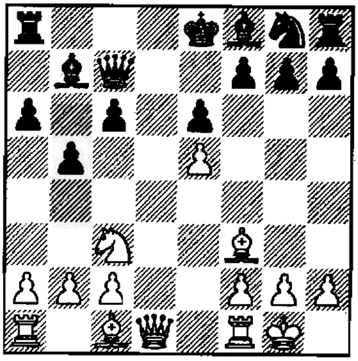
Of the games played by me against Kasparov, the most interesting are those from the period of his youth, when Garry did not yet hold the champion's title, although it was clear that he was born for it. Here is one of them.

Kasparov-Polugayevsky
46th USSR Championship, Tbilisi, 1978
Sicilian Defence

1	e4	c5
2	♘f3	e6
3	d4	cxd4
4	♘xd4	a6
5	♘c3	♕c7
6	♗e2	b5
7	♗f3	♗b7
8	0-0	♘c6

For a long time the Paulsen Variation was one of my favourite set-ups in the Sicilian Defence. The move order chosen by Black is the best plan, and gives him good chances (this is why theory considers 5 ♗d3 to be the strongest), and I had already played this against Estrin, Moscow 1964: after 9 ♘xc6 dxc6 10 a4 ♗d6 11 axb5 cxb5 12 e5 ♗xe5 13 ♘xb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 15 ♗xa8 ♗xh2+ 16 ♔h1 ♗d6 Black had no difficulties.

9	♘xc6	dxc6
10	e5!?!	



After prolonged thought Garry takes the bold decision to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative. Already at that time he attached enormous importance to the opening, and for him it was psychologically very important to gain an advantage with White. He was not satisfied by a quiet course of events, with which Black would not have any particular problems. And therefore he does not 'begrudge' giving up material, provided he can dictate matters.

Of course, White's idea can hardly be regarded as correct, but at the board it can be very difficult to find a series of best moves to demonstrate this.

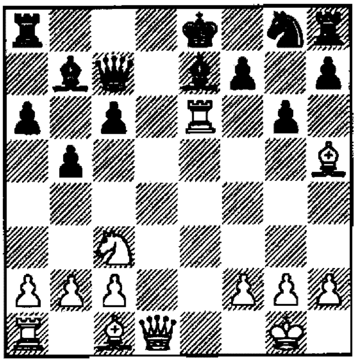
10	...	♕xe5
11	♖e1	♕c7
12	♗h5	

It is on this bishop manoeuvre that White is pinning his hopes. Occupying the open e-file and aiming at f7, he hopes to exploit his lead in development.

12	...	♗e7!

Black proves equal to the occasion: in this way he finds a strong tactical antidote against White's threats. Black intends 13...♘f6, after which White does not appear to have any compensation for the pawn, and therefore one can easily understand Kasparov's decision to go in for a piece sacrifice.

13	♖xe6!?	g6!



It was on this that Black was counting, having prepared a shrewd trap: 14 ♕d4 fxe6 15 ♕xh8 0-0-0 16 ♗g4 ♗f6 17 ♗xe6+ ♔b8, and White loses his queen.

It should be mentioned that the alternative 13...♘f6 was unsatisfactory, in view of 14 ♘e4! ♘xh5 (14...0-0 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16 ♖xf6! gxf6 17 ♗h6) 15 ♕xh5 0-0 16 ♗f4!

14 ♖e1 ♖d8?

It is Black's inconsistency that causes his downfall in this game. His entire plan was aimed at winning the bishop, but at the last moment he diverges.

I will disclose a secret: I was afraid of the variation 14...gxh5 15 ♕d4 (15 ♗g5 c5) 15...f6 16 ♕d1! ♔f8 17 ♕xh5, and I decided to choose a quieter alternative, if only to avoid falling in with my young opponent.

While psychologically Black can to some extent be excused, on considerations of principle his action can in no way be approved.

Of course, despite White being a piece down, it would be dangerous to underestimate his initiative. Nevertheless, Black's forces are quite well mobilised, and after 17...h6 and 18...♖h7 he would have had every reason to hope to parry White's assault and retain a material advantage.

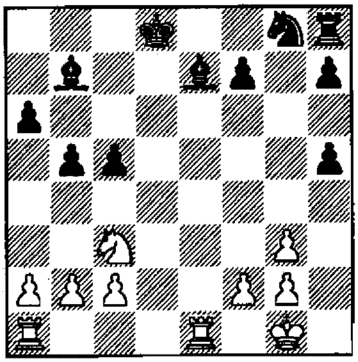
15 ♕f3 c5
16 ♗f4!

White does not allow his opponent a respite: now on 16...♗xf3 there follows 17 ♗xc7 ♗xh5 18 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 19 f3! g5 20 ♖ad1+, and Black's position does not inspire confidence.

16 ... ♕b6
17 ♕g3 gxh5
18 ♗c7

All this was precisely calculated by White. He avoids the trap 18 ♕g7? ♕g6 19 ♖xe7+ ♘xe7! 20 ♕xh8+ ♔d7 21 ♖d1+ ♗d5, and takes play into a slightly favourable ending.

18 ... ♕g6
19 ♗xd8 ♕xg3
20 hxg3 ♔xd8



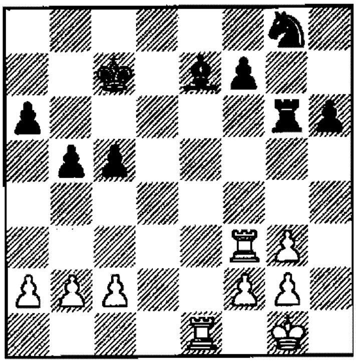
A surprising situation: Black has two minor pieces for a rook, and would not appear to have any grounds for concern. But this is not quite the case. White succeeds in exchanging one of the active enemy bishops, and Black's remaining pieces are very passive, and his pawns weakened.

21 ♖ad1+ ♔c7
22 ♘d5+ ♗xd5
23 ♖xd5 h6!

Black finds the only correct defence, by which he succeeds in bringing his rook into play.

24 ♖xh5 ♖h7
25 ♖he5 ♔d7
26 ♖5e3 ♖g7

27	♖d3+	♔c7
28	♖a3	♖g6
29	♖f3	



The white rooks are operating with great force over the entire board, and yet Black has succeeded in consolidating. Now I should have repeated moves, especially since at that moment time trouble was approaching. I think that after 29...♖g7 Black would have had real chances of gaining a draw. But again, for the second time, I was let down by inconsistency.

29	...	♗f6?
30	c3	♔d7
31	♖d3+	♔c7
32	♖e8	

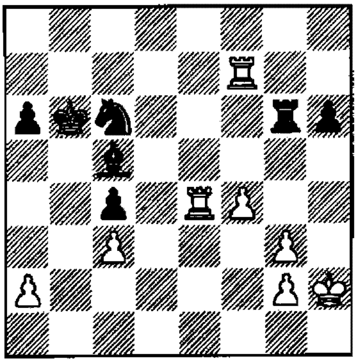
As a result of his mistake, Black's pieces are tied to one another, as if linked by a single rope, and have essentially deprived themselves of any scope. Now the lesser evil was 32...♗e7, going totally onto the defensive.

32	...	♘e7
33	♖ed8	♘c6
34	♖8d7+	♔b6
35	♖xf7	

The two rooks have done their work: White has won a second pawn and gained real chances of an eventual win.

Seeing White's actions in this game, one immediately recognizes the stamp of the present Champion: that same passion and energy!

35	...	♗e7
36	♖e3	♗d6
37	f4	c4
38	♔h2	♗c5
39	♖e2	b4
40	♖e4	bxc3
41	bxc3	



Here the time trouble ended, and an analysis of the adjourned position showed that White should win without difficulty.

41	...	♗f2
42	♖xc4	♗xg3+
43	♔h3	♗e1
44	a4	♘a5
45	♖b4+?	

In a winning position White unexpectedly makes a silly mistake. The simple 45 ♖e4 ♗xc3 46 f5 would have cleared the way for the f-pawn. Now Black is given a chance.

45	...	♔c5??

Returning the compliment. After 45... ♔c6! 46 ♖f5 ♖g3+! 47 ♔h2 ♖xc3 48 ♖xa5 ♗g3+ 49 ♔h3 ♗e1+! Black gains a draw, since on 50 ♔g4 there follows 50...♖g3+.

46	♖f5+	**Black resigns**

Postscript

I have talked about work which has been in progress for many a year. It cannot be interrupted, as long as a chess player is playing chess. I thought it wrong to keep to myself the joys and disappointments it has brought me, and those twists of fortune I have had to, and will, experience. Perhaps this confession will prove useful to others, who also devote their time and effort to the search for truth in chess. In my opinion, it is only such difficult work, which is confirmed or refuted in practice, that constitutes the point of a life in chess. And it is this that leads to that chess harmony which we admire, and for which we strive.

Index of Opponents

Averbakh 114

Bagirov 46
Barlov 143
Belyavsky 104
Bobotsov 149, 167
Botvinnik 194
Bronstein 10, 12, 57, 131
Byelov 53

De Firmian 103
Djindjihashvili 14

Fabian 25
Filip 132
Fischer 210
Furman 9, 11

Geller 8, 172
Gipslis 146
Gligoric 136
Grünfeld 101
Gufeld 8

Hartston 129
Hector 65
Hellers 110, 127
Hort 177
Hulak 122

Ilivitsky 5
Ivashin 3
Ivkov 144

Karpov 212
Kasparov 217
Kavalek 87, 105, 174
Kholmov 154
Korchnoi 188, 191
Kotkov 7
Krogius 7
Kuzmin 81

Larsen 116
Ljubojevic 65

Matulovic 68
Mecking 180, 181

Najdorf 169
Nezhmetdinov 41
Nikitin 23
Novopashin 50

Olafsson 76
Ortega 55
Osnos 157

Petrosian 204
Psakhis 74

Quinteros 81

Rodriguez, Am. 108

Sakharov 30
Smyslov 197
Spassky 28, 207
Stein 8
Suetin 31, 35, 125

Taimanov 11
Tal 15, 105, 106, 182, 201
Timman 13
Torre 18

Vaganian 120
Vasyukov 140

Wolff 110

Yudovich 72

Zagorovsky 43
Zaitsev, A. 160, 163
Zaitsev, I. 148

Index of Openings

Catalan Opening 163
English Opening 11, 13, 154, 181, 191, 194, 210
King's Indian Defence 8, 174
Nimzo-Indian Defence 9, 169, 204, 207, 212
Queen's Gambit Declined 14, 184, 201
Queen's Indian Defence 167, 188, 198
Ruy Lopez 3
Sicilian Defence 7, 10, 157, 172, 177, 217
Semi-Slav Defence 5, 17

Index of Variations in Chapter 2

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 b5

- 8 ♕f3 *23-26*
- 8 a3 *26-27*
- 8 ♗d3 *27-31*
- 8 ♗e2 *31-36*
- **8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7**
  - 10 ♘f3 *37*
  - 10 ♗xb5+ *105-106*
  - **10 exf6 ♕e5+**
    - 11 ♘e4 *37-42*
    - 11 ♕e2 *42-43*
    - **11 ♗e2 ♕xg5**
      - **12 0-0**
        - 12...♖a7 13 ♕d3 ♖d7 14 ♘e4 ♕e5
          - 15 c3 *43-46*
          - 15 ♘f3
            - 15...♕xb2 *47-50*
            - 15...♕c7 *50-51*
        - **12...♕e5**
          - 13 fxg7 *53-54*
          - 13 ♔h1 *54*
          - 13 ♗f3 55-57
          - 13 ♘f3 *104*
          - 13 ♗h5 *105*

    - **12 ♕d3**
      - 12...♕h4+ *58-60, 65*
      - 12...♘d7 *62*
      - 12...gxf6 *62*
      - 12...♖a7 *63-64*
      - 12...♗b7 *64*
      - **12...♕xf6 13 ♖f1**
        - 13...♕e5
          - 14 ♖d1 ♖a7
            - 15 ♘f3 *65-66, 106-110*
            - 15 ♘dxb5 *110-111*
          - 14 0-0-0 *66-68*
        - 13...♕g6 *68-69*
- **10 ♕e2**
  - 10...♗b4 *69*
  - 10...b4 *69-70*
    - **10...♘fd7 11 0-0-0**
      - 11...♗b4 *70-71*
      - 11...b4 *71*
      - 11...♗e7 *72*
      - **11...♗b7**
        - 12 ♗f4 *72-73*
        - 12 ♘f5 *74-75*
        - 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 *75-76*
          - 13 ♕g4 *76-79*
          - 13 ♕h5+ *79-84*
        - **12 ♕g4**
          - 12...♕b6 *85-91*
          - 12...♕xe5 *91-99*
      - **11...♘c6 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♕d3**
        - 13...♗c5 *71*
        - 13...♗b4 *71*
        - 13...h6 *100-103*

GRANDMASTER
Achievement

LYEV POLUGAYEVSKY

In this original and highly acclaimed book, revised for the first Cadogan edition, Super-Grandmaster Lyev Polugayevsky describes his personal approach to chess, one which has taken him to the uppermost reaches of the game. Here he highlights the factors which have enabled him to reach the top:

- Opening preparation
- Adjournment analysis
- Preparation for decisive encounters

Of particular interest is his account of what has become known as the Polugayevsky Variation, one of the sharpest variations of the Sicilian Defence. Here we can share the author's joys and disappointments as he attempts over a period of many years to uphold his brain-child against attempts to 'bury it'.

Lyev Polugayevsky, one of the world's leading players over the last thirty years, has been a Candidate for the World Championship on numerous occasions. A companion volume entitled *Grandmaster Performance,* also translated by Ken Neat, is available from Cadogan.

ISBN 1-85744-049-8

9 781857 440492